Ethnic Tourism Advertisements: The Power Dynamic and its Effect on Cultural Representation in the 'Kingdom of Daughters'

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores ethnic tourism concepts of authenticity and cultural commodification using tourism advertisements aimed at the Mosuo ethnic group in China. One of the preliminary steps in attracting tourists to visit a tourist destination is advertising. Since advertisements are integral to the ethnic tourism process, consequently, one must question how cultural producers represent Mosuo culture to prospective customers? What images and language patterns do advertisers commonly use to portray the Mosuo? By examining previously published works, studying sociological and anthropological concepts, and incorporating previous fieldwork, this thesis explores how a Chinese ethnic group is advertised and how this affects their society. A substantial amount of anthropological work has focused on the Mosuo's matrilineal kinship system, pairing system, and tourism culture. However, there has yet to be an in depth socio-anthropological analysis of Chinese media images of the Mosuo and its influence on local ethnic identity. This research is considered a case study and adds to the work of other ethnic tourism scholars conducting content analysis on advertising's role in constructing perceptions of ethnicity, culture, sexuality, and authenticity. Though the sample is small, the results suggest that certain language is closely associated with Mosuo media portrayal and that imaged locals and Lugu Lake are often utilized as a sexualized commodity.

Keywords: Ethnic tourism; authenticity; cultural commodification; Mosuo; China; tourism advertising

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

On one of my return trips to Yunnan Province, China, a colorful banner caught my eye as our train coasted to a stop in the Kunming train station. In the foreground, the advertisement featured young beautiful women wearing their ethnic garbs, dancing, singing, and smiling down at the new arrivals. In the background, the landscape illustrated far-reaching fields, large waterfalls, and scenery of Yunnan's famous Stone Forest. The banner was advertising for the Yunnan Nationalities Village amusement park and local ethnic tourist spots bordering the capital.

This ad inspired me to visit the Stone Forest and local minority villages around Kunming. At the same time, I wondered about the lack of men in the advertisement and the emphasis on young ethnic women. This experience made me curious about the representations of gender within Chinese ethnic tourism advertising. What sorts of motivations inspire tourists to travel to a far off destination in rural China and how do these kinds of ads fit into this dynamic? As an aspiring anthropologist, all of these questions and ideas filled my mind and inspired this thesis.

Tourism advertising, as well as tourism in general, is a fairly new phenomenon in China. In the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping's opening and reform policies began loosening government control over the economy. As a result, China's domestic tourism industry expanded rapidly. By the 90s, the industry reached new heights with major financial resources and infrastructure development in remote, rural areas (Zhang 1997). A culturally diverse region in southwestern

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China, Yunnan province is home to twenty-five government recognized ethnic minority groups. The local government and people embraced ethnic tourism for its promises of modernization and, in turn, wealth and prosperity. The region began transforming its poor economy and poverty-stricken counties through economic development focusing on tourism.

Tourism has accelerated the speed of modernization in minority communities. But some scholars argue these developments may occur at the expense of traditional cultural practices (Yang 2008: 753). In Yunnan, the tourism industry grew dramatically through the 90s and played a pivotal role in branding the region as a prime tourist destination (Donaldson 2007). According to the latest statistics, the region has hosted well over 90 million domestic tourists and 2.2 million international tourists (Yunnan Province Statistical Bureau 2008).

This thesis begins with an introduction to a prominent ethnic group, the Mosuo, and a preliminary review of ethnicity in the context of Chinese tourism, with a deeper consideration of two key concepts in the definition of ethnicity: authenticity and cultural commodification. While many scholars have noted the impacts of ethnic tourism on minority culture in China (e.g. Greenwood, 1977; Swain, 1990; Knödel, 1998; Oakes, 1998; Walsh, 2001b, 2005; Mattison, 2010), there has yet to be a thorough socio-anthropological analysis of mass media images of Mosuo culture and its influence on local ethnic identity. This thesis explores the ethnic group's tourism advertising patterns and its impact on Mosuo cultural representation. I argue that Mosuo culture, people, and their environment are overly sexualized in mainstream tourism websites. Though there has been discussion on the over-sexualization of Mosuo women, there has yet to be a thorough analysis on how Mosuo men and the environment are sexualized for the online reader, as notions of masculinity are often central to the experience. Using previous studies by

Walsh and others, this project adds depth to the study of gender and sexuality representations of Mosuo culture.

1.1 Who are the Mosuo?

The Mosuo are a self-identified Chinese ethnic group. The population speaks a Tibeto-Burman language. With a population of approximately 40,000 people, the Mosuo primarily live in Yunnan's Yongning region and Lugu Lake, high in the Himalayan Mountains, making the region the "cultural center" of Mosuo territory (see Figure 1). These areas are located along the border of Yunnan and Sichuan provinces in southwestern China (Walsh 2005). The province is located in Southwest China and is home to more than 25 officially recognized ethnic groups. These groups comprise one third of Yunnan's total population.

The Chinese government does not officially recognize the Mosuo as one of the nation's fifty-five ethnic minority groups. Instead, the government administers the Mosuo people in Yunnan as part of the Naxi minority while those in Sichuan are considered Mongolian. The tourism industry normally refers to the Mosuo as a people (*mosuoren*) and not a separate minority (*mosuozu*). Some of the sample websites did introduce the Mosuo as a *shaoshu minzu* (ethnic minority), but most kept to the uncontroversial route by referring to the group as a *people*.

Known as the "Kingdom of Women," Mosuo (Qin 2011, Zhou 2005) attract much attention for their matrilineal society and "exotic" pairing system, called *tisese*, or called "walking back and forth" in Mosuo. This practice occurs in the middle of the night when a man visits his lover with the intent of having sexual relations in her household. The following morning, he secretly returns to his natal home. Relationships can last from one night to entire

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lifetimes. *Tisese* continues the matrilineal line as children are born into the mother's household. The biological father shares no affinal relations with his child. Instead, he plays a vital role in the child rearing practices of his own mother's house (Shih 1993). Since this matrilineal pairing system is uncommon in contemporary Chinese society, it has garnered much attention from news media, novelists, and the tourism industry.
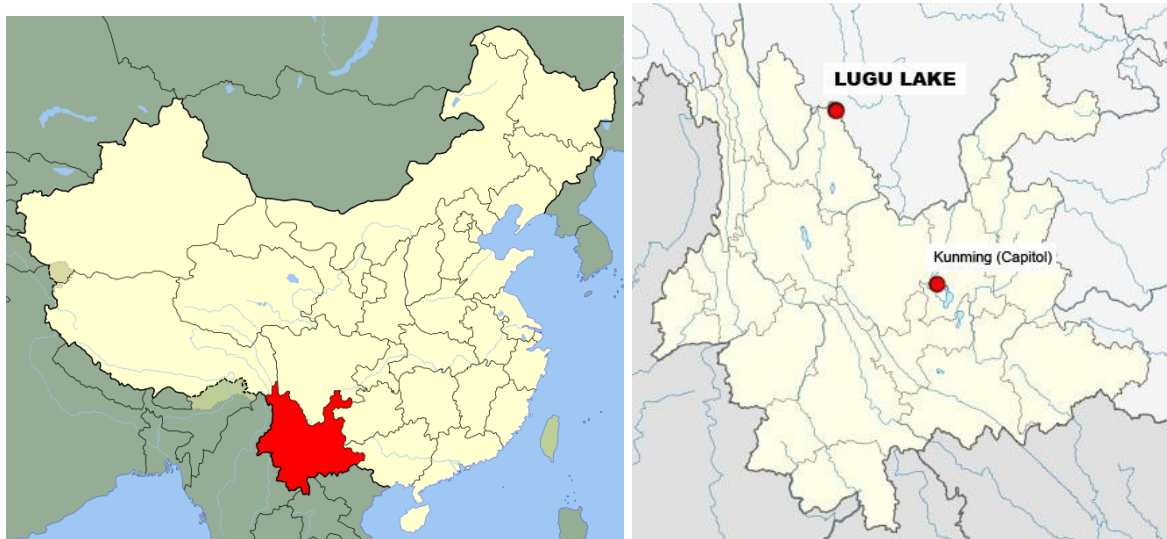
Figure 1. Location of Yunnan Province and Lugu Lake

The ethnic group's unique kinship and "marriage" system brings to mind the classical anthropological case of the matrilineal Nyar of India, which calls into question the universality of marriage and the nuclear family. The Mosuo and Nyar share a similar uniqueness in that they both have "visiting partners" in their traditional pairing systems and host matrilineal kinship systems. The Nyar call their marriage ritual "visiting husbands," where the father does not share familial relations with the matrilineal line and has no responsibility over child rearing his *own* children. He instead plays a rule in taking care of his sister's children. Gough (1959) countered George P. Murdoch's (1949) argument that stated the nuclear family is a universal phenomenon by describing the case of the Nyar. She argued that marriage only becomes universal when its

rituals are socially approved by offspring, thus illustrating marriage as a cultural phenomenon. The Mosuo played a similar role in China by surprising Chinese anthropologists with their alternative form of marriage and kinship. This not only introduced a new (and "backward") form of marriage to contemporary Chinese society, but also highlighted a stark difference in sexuality between Mosuo and Han women: "free love" versus repressed sexuality. This distinct difference inspired tourism development and Chinese anthropologists to study their seemingly "primitive" society.

As part of the government policies, tourism rapidly developed around Lugu Lake in the mid-1990s. Today the area welcomes tens of thousands of tourists annually who seek to observe the Mosuo's unique culture. All the activity changed Mosuo society from a once poor farming area to one of Yunnan's most lucrative tourist destinations.

Mass media images bridge the gap between the Mosuo and the "outside" world. The images not only shape tourists' expectations of the area, but also "commodify" Mosuo culture to a point that certain cultural practices can be marketed and sold by the tourism industry. This research explores the possible cultural implications of these online representations on the local population. I will use prior experience in Yunnan province and other ethnographic research (Harrell 2000, Walsh 2005, Mattison 2010) to conduct a thorough preliminary analysis on the relationship between tourists and locals of this region. This will serve as the basis for the next phase of research, funded by a Fulbright grant that will be conducted in the region in 2012-2013.

This phase of my research addresses the following questions: 1) How does the domestic tourism industry advertise Mosuo culture to tourists using mass media, such as the strategic use of wording and placement of images on websites? and 2) In what ways might this challenge local ethnic identity as minority people participate in tourism activities and represent their culture for

visitors? During my 2012-2013 Fulbright fieldwork, I will investigate how locals meet these challenges of media representation.

This research is organized around responses to these key questions and the next three sections address them in detail. Section two is devoted to understanding tourism studies theory. This theory establishes the foundation upon which this thesis discussion is built. The third section focuses on popular media theory and its relationship to Mosuo society, power relations, and cultural representation. Section four features a quantitative study on Mosuo tourism websites and a discussion on the gendered implications of their media content. A qualitative media analysis methodology adds deeper discussion to the quantitative study. By understanding the relationship between the advertisements and the tourist, one can use this knowledge to revise tourism promotion methods and represent the Mosuo more accurately. This will be beneficial for advertisers, tourists, and especially, the local people who are arguably the most affected by ethnic tourism.

Advertisements are the tourist's introduction to Mosuo culture. The ad is the first attempt to excite and persuade potential tourists to pack their bags and visit Lugu Lake. By studying Mosuo image patterns conveyed to Chinese audiences in online tourism advertisements, it is possible to better understand the construction of tourist expectations and how it connects to the power dynamic within the ethnic tourism system.

2.0   THEORETICAL REVIEW: TOURISM STUDIES THEORY

The anthropology of tourism gained mainstream attention in the mid 1900's. Since then, many anthropologists have focused on ethnicity and its role in tourism (e.g. Smith 1977; Greenwood 1977; Oakes 1998; Chambers 2000; Walsh 2001a). One key line of inquiry examines how tourism is motivated by the commodification of cultural identity. This makes "culture bites" (see Ann Anagnost) marketable and thus profitable to a domestic and international audience (MacCannell 1984). Anthropologists often note that tourists travel to the "middle of nowhere" in order to escape modern day society and immerse themselves into more "exotic" (Walsh 2005), "nostalgic" (Bruner 1994: 410) and "authentic" (MacCannell 1976) cultures. In order to understand the motivation driving ethnic tourism advertisements, development, and the tourists themselves, this thesis explores the two concepts of 1) authenticity and 2) cultural commodification.

2.1 Ethnic Tourism

Smith introduced and defined "ethnic tourism" as tourism "marketed to the public in terms of the 'quaint' customs of indigenous and often exotic peoples" (1977: 2). This concept is the basis for much scholarship and an emerging sub-discipline that explores a type of "tourism motivated by a visitor's search for exotic cultural experiences, including the consumption of

artifacts, performances, and other products or services" (Yang 2008: 752). Tourists travel to isolated minority villages in search of a unique experience and "authentic" culture, a culture they witness firsthand by participating in festivals, ceremonies, and meeting locals. In the ethnic tourism industry, participating villages may experience an identity as "Other" because they are mainly perceived as rural, pre-modern, or primitive (Said 1991). These perceived differences heighten tourism revenue by attracting visitors who want to seek an escape from a life of urbanization. At the same time, it creates a paradox of modernity—the visitors leave modernity to experience a "simple life" in minority villages, but they are really just participating in another world shaped by modernization.

Ethnic tourism may work to promote cultural diversity while, at the same time, constructing staged cultural events and performances to satisfy tourists. Locals and government officials use authenticity to make money. As a form of tourism impacting minority cultures around the world, it is important for policymakers, tourists, companies, and locals to understand the subject of ethnic tourism.

2.2 Authenticity

Since MacCannell (1973) introduced the concept of authenticity in tourism studies, it has received much attention among tourism scholars who have questioned "what is [authenticity], who possesses it, and if it can be found" (Yang 2007). "Authenticity" in the context of ethnic tourism in China is an important concept, especially in relation to tourists' expectations of a new culture. This thesis defines "authenticity" to a person's expectation of what a tourist destination should be like. The potential traveler expects to witness a "real" culture in an "authentic" place

with its "primitive-like" people[1]. Tourism authorities also use "authenticity" to their advantage by attracting tourists with advertisements that promise an "exotic" culture. After the visit, the traveler returns to stressful "modern" society, spiritually fulfilled from the short vacation.

This brief explanation of authenticity in ethnic tourism leads to the first question identified by Li Yang: "What is authenticity?" According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "authentic" means "something that is worthy of acceptance or belief as based on fact," and "something that is *real* and not an imitation" (2010, italics added). This fits into what tourists *wish* to experience when they visit a new culture. Tourists want to see a place and experience a culture untarnished by the visitor's own culture and lifestyles. While "authentic" hints at being untouched and stagnate, authenticity can still be dynamic and susceptible to manipulation. It is difficult to give a clear definition of authenticity because it is the subjective opinion of each visitor. Because of authenticity's subjective complexities, scholars continue to define authenticity's role in ethnic tourism.

Given the complicated uses of "authenticity," one inevitably questions upon whose authority an "authentic" experience may be built. Who possesses authenticity? Some scholars say the local tourism bureau or government control it because they hold the power of cultural representation (Pritchard & Morgan 2000). Cultural producers, such as advertisers, travel agencies and Chinese state authorities, also play a role in constructing Mosuo cultural representations. According to Eileen Walsh and Margaret Swain (2004), the popularity of ethnic culture in Yunnan province, has encouraged tourism authorities to "produce development plans

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[1] The expectation of primitivism in ethnic minorities is influenced by the works of Lewis Henry Morgan who emphasized the progress of human kind through a series of three stages: savagery to barbarism to civilization. China's communist teachings still focus on the stages of human development and is a common subject to find in a middle school curriculum. Most ethnic minorities continue to be seen as more "backward" than the most developed of all the 56 nationalities, the Han.

based on the representations of exotic cultural images and charming customs of minorities" (see Yang 2008: 764). Due to Yunnan's multicultural diversity, ethnic tourism is by far the most profitable form of tourism for the government. This has led to rapid development in minority tourist towns, often administered by local tourism bureaus.

Oakes argues that perceived notions of authenticity are actually constructed by minority villagers who "perform" their culture to visitors (1998). In this way, locals have the power to manipulate conceptions of authenticity to satisfy tourists, and also make a profit in the process. So, while the government has official control over tourism management, the locals still have some agency over authenticity. Many minority villages undergoing tourism development can follow local authorities' policies while holding autonomy over their own cultural representations.

Despite the power of state policies, advertisers may have greater influence in construction of identity and tourist practices. For example, "The tour brochure directs expectations, influences perceptions, and thereby provides a preconceived landscape for the tourist to 'discover.' Thus, the directed landscape becomes the real landscape" (Weightman 1987: 230). This "reality" shapes tourists' understanding of the culture and people, and may also raise unrealistic expectations of their future cultural experience (see Urry 1990). The cultural producer is the main actor that constructs the "authentic" and ethnic landscape. In this study, "advertiser" and "cultural producer" share the same meaning.

Cultural producers are often elites in control over a community's representation in the media, in this case, Mosuo ethnic group's cultural representation. Examples of cultural producers used in this paper will be tourism website editors and layout artists. Other cultural producers could be novelists and journalists, who also play a large role in constructing a marketable and desirable understanding of the Mosuo. There is no one group that "possesses" authenticity.

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Advertisers play a very prominent role in manipulating perceptions of Mosuo lifestyle and culture for their own company or government's interests—to make a profit and increase numbers of tourists. Locals do have agency to play with this constructed authenticity, but it is often constrained by the power of advertising.

Finally, to answer the third question: "can [authenticity] be found?" In keeping with Tim Oakes' "paradox of authenticity" theory, I argue that authenticity is unattainable. Oakes exposes the word's contradictory usage by writing, "the paradox of authenticity is that it vaporizes only when you look for it…to the extent that this need leads one on a journey, a quest for some*thing* or some*where* 'authentic," yet it will always recede and disappear from view (2006; 250: See Kolås 2008 for further analysis). The sight of seeing another traveler (especially if there are many) can take away the possibility of an "authentic" experience, since reaching a sense of authenticity is often through individual experience (Van de Bergh & Keyes 1984).[2]

As cities in China began to develop throughout the 1990s and wealth began to circulate among the population, leisure tourism among the upper and middle class citizens became possible (Oakes, 1998). Oakes describes that the average Han businessman often wants to escape mundane society by "travelling back to the past," and experiencing a "simpler" time. However, how will one ever find something or somewhere that has been untouched by modern society when the concept of authenticity is of modernization's own creation? Oakes (2006: 232) describes authenticity as a "phantom of modernity." To the tourist's dismay, ethnic locals are already aware of the concept of authenticity and have already used it to their advantage to attract

[2] Chinese tourists and international tourists share different expectations of authenticity. Chinese tourists often expect minorities to entertain them by performances and understand that the village may have other tourists there, whereas international tourists (especially Europeans and Americans) are quickly dissatisfied by staged performances and large amounts of tourists. Western tourists predominately travel off "the beaten path" to more secluded minority areas to get away from the "touristy" atmosphere of tourist hotspots.

tourists. Eileen Walsh (2005) reveals that the Mosuo are acutely aware that their culture sells. They are aware of their cultural price value and understand how to *perform* their culture to satisfy tourists by giving them what they want: a glimpse of their "true" way of life.

This is also the case in Oakes' (1998) observations of two Miao (Mhong) villages in the mountains of Guizhou province. He illustrates a competition between two villages (Zhaoxing and Jitang), each fighting to be "more authentic" than the other. The *most* authentic village will get the *most* tourists, and will later have the *most* opportunities for economic and cultural development. Therefore, he concludes that authenticity is no longer just a concept, but has now turned into something tangible, like currency (227). Authenticity is unattainable but perceptions of authenticity are real.

Authenticity as currency is an important concept in understanding ethnic tourism. Oakes' description of the struggle between the two Miao villages illustrates how authenticity is a marketing method. Both advertisers and the minorities are aware that culture sells and will take advantage of authenticity in order to get more profit. The more "authentic" a minority village is, the more wealth it receives. The wealthier it becomes, the more the local government reaps benefits. This motivates cultural producers to create more persuasive websites or brochures to attract even more tourists, thus reproducing perceptions of "authenticity".

2.3 Cultural Commodification

When tourism develops in an ethnic minority village, unique characteristics of the local culture are often given a higher interest value than others. Tourists pay more for certain features of the local culture, motivating local people to perform it even more. Erik Cohen describes commoditization as "a process by which things (and activities) come to be evaluated primarily in

terms of their exchange value, in a context of trade, thereby becoming goods (and services)"
(2004: 111). Whether it's the souvenirs and trinkets that older women sell on busy market streets
or ethnic performances in village centers, commoditization manifests itself in a number of ways.
A more recent definition coined by Yang (2007) is: cultural commodification is a process where
artifacts (folk arts and crafts), "traditional cultures, exotic lifestyles and performances are
represented, manufactured, and transformed into marketable tourist products and put on the stage
for sale." (29). I argue that this definition can include the minority's natural environment, which
may also be transformed for the sake of touristic profit. For example, the Hani minority of
southern Yunnan province who are famous for their beautiful terraced rice fields (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Yuanyang Rice Terraces, popular tourist destination, [Yunnan, China] (personal photo)

Many tourism scholars have noted the cultural commodification of festivals, dances,
songs, and overall cultural activities. However, the commodification of minority land is not often
mentioned in these analyses. My visit to the Hani villages of Yuanyang, Yunnan introduced me
to this other form of making touristic profit. Since tourism developed in the Hani rice terrace

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regions of Yuanyang, transportation to the area has been reinforced and dozens of scenic lookouts have been cleared and built into the mountainsides. When I visited Yuanyang, my group traveled the twisting roads, seeking the many lookout points where young women dressed in Hani traditional garbs would sell souvenirs. From my short visit there, tourism industry appeared to focus less on the representations of Hani lifestyle. Instead, they placed a stronger focus on the area's beautiful landscapes.

By paying an entrance fee, tourists can leisurely experience Yuanyang's scenery, while the industry and Hani Minority gain a profit. While visiting a small village next to a developed lookout point, many households had nice looking homes with painted walls, concrete roofs, and so on. At the same time, traditional Hani straw sections overlaid the modern concrete roofs (see Figure 3). While the Hani minority in the village had apparently received economic benefits from the recent economic development, "they" (most likely the local tourism authorities) still used straw roofs to keep an "authentic" and "primitive" appearance and hide the modern development. When my classmates and I toured the village, the residents were not as invested in accommodating visitors than other ethnic villages we visited. Local people directed us to the sidewalk leading to the beautiful rice paddies as the major attraction. Tourism does not solely commodify the social aspects of culture per say, but also the environment in which local people have lived in for hundreds of years.

This is just one example of how a minority people's land and environment can be culturally commoditized. For the Hani, the land is very connected to the group's culture. Lugu Lake is similar in this respect. Tourists hike the local mountains to take pictures of the lake, its landscape, and pig-trough boats gliding along its calm waters. The landscape is consumable and just as profitable as the local lifestyle.
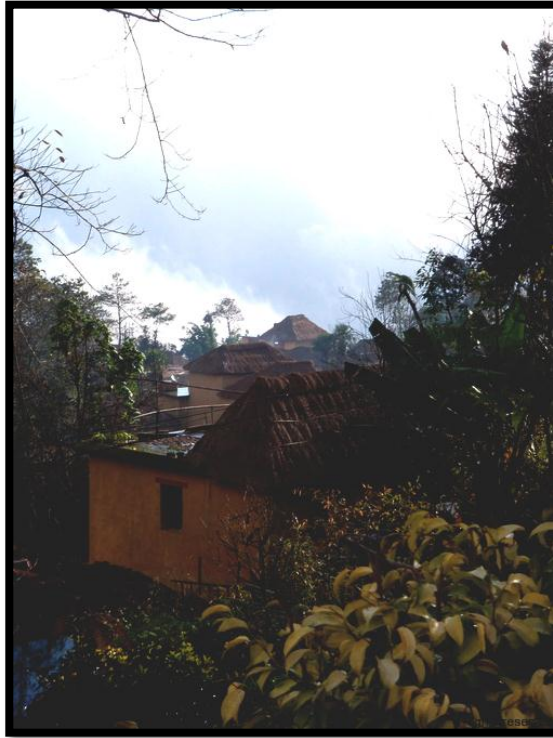
Figure 4. Small Hani village by a developed look-out (personal photo)

2.4 "Staged Authenticity"

As the influx of tourism enters a minority village and develops into their society, this often sparks tensions between the locals and tourism authorities/local government agencies. "What happens to the other meanings (particularly religious, cultural, and social) of things (and activities) once they become commoditized, particularly under the impact of tourism?" (Cohen 1988: 380-1). As tourism develops in a minority village, traditions and customs often change. Once exclusively meaningful to the indigenous community, age-old traditions get put on display or even "invented" to fit the tourism dynamic (Hobsbawn 1983). Within a community, this can lead to rising tensions as a minority group fights to keep its traditions, while also supporting economic development. One example is when annual festivals are performed everyday at

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minority folk village. These Epcot-like theme parks celebrate numerous minority cultures all in one, easily walkable area (see Figure 4).

Figure 3. A young man from the Lisu nationality of Yunnan province climbs the "Mountain of Swords" for the tourist audience. The ladder is made up of knifes and swords while the young man climbs it without shoes. This traditional ceremony is performed many times a day at the park. [Minority Folk Village, Kunming, Yunnan] (personal photo)

Yang (2007) explains one of the major issues that arise in these situations: "Cultural commodification often produces a social situation in which local people alter their behaviors and even their lives to suit the demands of tourists, which raises many debates about authenticity and commodification." (29). The hosts accommodate their culture to outsider expectations so to earn a profit and satisfy tourists, while possibly changing their traditional way of life in the process. Like the Hani of Yuanyang, tourism has completely changed their land, which once had an exclusively spiritual and agricultural meaning to them, but now is shared by some 500,000 tourists that visit the area annually (Guo, 210: 27).

MacCannell (1973) introduces the concept called "staged authenticity," a theory that is based on Erving Goffman's structural division theory that distributes social life within two spaces: the onstage and backstage. Goffman argues that individuals participate in a social

performance, where there are *front* and *back regions*, like stages in a theater. The host (or performers) occupies the front and back regions while the guest (or audience) only observes in the front. Like an actor, the host "wears a mask" while he/she performs onstage. When the performer returns "backstage", he/she is relieved of concealment and becomes him/herself again. Supposedly, the backstage is where you can find a sense of authenticity (Goffman 1959). MacCannell extends Goffman's theory of the "back region" when he writes, "An unexplored aspect of [Goffman's] back regions is how their mere existence, and the possibility of their violation [i.e., strangers glimpsing into them], functions to sustain the commonsense polarity of social life into what is taken to be 'real' and what is thought to be 'show'" (p. 591).

Walsh's (2005) research also describes the Mosuo as having a "staged" front stage and even a "staged" backstage. Some tourists think they are bypassing the "touristy" parts of Mosuo culture by not attending orchestrated performances or following tour guides. Instead these types of tourists visit households and believe they are meeting "real" villagers. This way, they expect to discover the true Mosuo perspective of their culture and the impact of tourism. According to Walsh, while tourists expect the experience to be "authentic," the villagers in actuality prepare "backstage performances" to tell curious tourists what they want to hear (p. 475-477).

While some tourism specialists have warned about the dangers of over-commercialization of a culture (Greenwood, 1989), others disagree and affirm that cultural commodification can transform and even stimulate cultural development (Cohen, 1988). Hitchcock and Teague (2008) even contest that "by marketing culture, people (re)discover their own history and traditions and begin to realize their own worth" (quote from Kolas 2008: 30). Cultural products can revitalize traditions and can help villagers acquire new meanings toward their culture as they define their cultural identity before presenting it to an audience. According to Oakes (1997), the process of

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commodification does not destroy a place's culture and identity nor does it make the area "inauthentic." Rather, commodification plays a significant role in helping minority groups construct their own place identity (p. 36).

Of those who visit ethnic minority villages, the majority are young, well educated, and from more economically developed areas of China (Yang 2012). According to Hughes (1995), there are two kinds of ethnic tourists: 1) post-industrial tourists and 2) post-modern tourists. Post-industrial tourists are more likely to be sensitive to their own effects on the local culture and conscious of their behavior during ethnic interactions. Post-modern tourists are more likely to enjoy attractions and contrived spectacles even while aware of its lack of authenticity. They also tend to pay little attention to their effect on the local culture.

Though the post-industrial and post-modern tourists differ in consumption and touristic behavior, they both share similar expectations of their visit—a unique and cultural experience away from urbanization. "Tourists…seek pristine, primitive, purer, or simpler forms of existence in other times and other places, when and where modernization has yet not taken place. Staged authenticity is thus used by [hosts] to recreate the past as if it were still present" (Yang 2012: 61). It is important to remember that the tourist's desires primarily derive from tourism websites and advertisers.

The concepts of authenticity, cultural commodification, and "staged authenticity" are interlinked in the ethnic tourism process. The tourist, local, and cultural producer interact with one another and utilize these concepts to develop tourism and gain a profit. In order to understand the power dynamic in ethnic tourism (Section 3), one must have a clear understanding of these three complex ideas.

2.5 Anthropology and the Internet

The Internet today is a widespread information infrastructure that influences the lives of millions of online users everyday. Pierre Pery (1997) was one of the first media scholars to discuss the interconnected relationship between anthropological "spaces" and cyberspace: "A new anthropological space, the *knowledge space,* is being formed today…[it] is a system of proximity (space) unique to the world of humanity (anthropological), and thus dependent on human technologies, significations, language, culture, conventions, representations, and emotions" (5). Only recently have anthropologists begun studying its inner workings and influence on society, such as Tom Boellstorff's *Coming of Age in Second Life* (2010) and Nicole Constable's *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and 'Mail Order' Marriages* (2003).

The focus of this research is an examination of website images and online documents pertaining to the Mosuo and travel to their communities. Understanding the relationship between the Internet and digital anthropological space will contribute to the growing body of work on cyberspace's influence on society. Cultural producers design brochures, travel websites, and advertisements. Many of these resources are primarily accessed through the Internet. They are written in Chinese and are aimed at a target audience of domestic Chinese tourists. In order to contextualize this analysis, I will now provide an overview of advertising theory and its relation to representing and reimaging Mosuo culture as I address the following questions: What is the ideological framework that influences Chinese ethnic tourism advertisers and what symbols do they use to entice tourists to travel to Lugu Lake? How do advertising and tourism interact in the marketing scheme and cultural process?

By looking into advertising theory and answering these questions, this will paint a clearer picture of advertising's major role in ethnic tourism, as well as how it constructs tourists' expectations of Lugu Lake.

3.0   THEORETICAL REVIEW: ADVERTISING THEORY

This section will explore contemporary media studies theory and how it relates to advertising Mosuo culture. Advertising is a form of communication with a goal of persuading its listener, viewer, or reader to consume something. This ranges from Coca-Cola advertisements on the sides of buses to websites that advertise Lugu Lake. "If we think of commodity imaging process as emanating from production, and then spreading to the point of sale, advertising is indeed the furthest extension outwards toward the tourist before actual ownership" (Wernick 1991: 33). The advertisement is the closest the consumer will ever be to experiencing the product before the fact and is often essential in creating desire for the commodity. After seeing the Coca-Cola bus advertisement, the viewer will imagine drinking it. While browsing through websites, the consumer will daydream of travelling to Lugu Lake. Websites build tourists' desires and constructs hyper real expectations of the advertised culture and its environment in order to build revenue from tourists. This is often at the expense of the Mosuo losing agency over cultural representation.

3.1 Advertising as Ideology

Andrew Wernick (1991) argues "all advertising, even the most informational and rationalistic, is ideological, if only in the formal sense that it places its audience in the role of buyer/consumer

and seeks to dispose that audience favorably towards what is for sale" (31). Though his research mainly focuses on Western advertising, Chinese ethnic tourism advertising also shares similar characteristics. He continues:

> The commodity they project as the object of desire is simultaneously presented as a cultural symbol charged with social significance; and the ego they seek to engage as the subject of desire is induced to adopt the socio-cultural identity attributed to those who already use the product (ibid.)

The advertised products often have double meanings: cultural symbol and social significance. One example of a "symbolized commodity" is the globally recognized Apple logo. As a socially significant symbol, the Apple logo portrays a fashionable, metropolitan behavior and identifies its users as trendy and upper-middle class. Not only is a Mac computer a symbol that portrays social class, but its logo also harnesses a strong cultural meaning for Western users. The logo, an apple with a bite mark on the top-right, plays off the biblical myth of Eve being tempted by the snake and biting into the apple from the tree of knowledge. That bite mark signifies Eve's thirst for knowledge and hints that the technologically advanced Apple products are a result of her temptation.

When Mosuo culture is advertised through tourism websites, their advertisements also host double meanings for their Chinese viewers. As a socially significant symbol, the Mosuo are seen as a "living fossil" (Yan, 1982) and significant in contemporary society for being the *last* matrilineal society in China. Advertisers often portray the two defining features of their culture that separates them from other ethnic groups: 1) non-marriage pairing system and 2) their matrilineal society. They also fail to acknowledge these matrilineal systems elsewhere in the world – further creating an exotcized image of the Mosuo.

The Mosuo also share a cultural meaning attributed to the region's nickname, "The Kingdom of Women" (*nü'er guo*). The 16th century Chinese epic, *Journey to the West,*

introduced a mythical land ruled by women known as "The Kingdom of Women." Ever since the Mosuo were "discovered" in the mid-20th century, the name of the mythical realm of beautiful temptresses has shifted over to represent the Mosuo people.

The creation of a "new myth" out of the old is a conscious decision made by advertisers to play on the culture's erotic appeal. These symbols not only encode cultural values, but also desire (Wernick 1991: 40). This desire is motivated by the Chinese society's dominant ideology—the dominant, male gaze—which influences mass media depictions of the Mosuo. For this context, "ideology" will represent a product of socialization that derives from a set of ideas proposed by the dominant Chinese social class (upper-class male Han perspective) to all members of society. The online advertisements of the Mosuo people are influenced by this dominant ideology, thus the texts and images are constructed to fit into this paradigm.

All forms of advertisements (brochures, online texts and images, etc.) are influenced by dominant ideologies. In the case of ethnic tourism advertisements, women are often seen as the commodities that are displayed as "consumables." This happens in Mosuo advertisements (Walsh 2005), as well as in advertisements aimed at the Dai minority group in southern Yunnan (Li 2003), and other ethnic groups around the world. This will be further discussed in Section 4.

3.2 Advertising, Tourism, and Power

As Said (1991) pointed out, "ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without…their configurations of power also being studied" (5) and tourism is also a cultural arena, which reflects these configurations of power (Pritchard & Morgan 2000: 887). There are many participants within the ethnic tourism system that share different levels of power in society. This thesis will focus on three main actors: 1) tourists, 2) the Mosuo, and 3) cultural

producers. Each of the actors motivates the other. The dominant media image of Chinese ethnic minority groups shows the daily lives of attractive ethnic "Others" singing, dancing, smiling, and celebrating festivals. The media also portrays their rustic, yet peaceful, simple way of life. This dominant image that tourists already acknowledge then motivates the advertiser to follow the existing pattern. Cultural producers take advantage of unique ethnic features. The advertisements motivate ethnic performers and tour guides to represent their culture in a way that will satisfy the visitor. The ethnic group motivates the tourist to go onto tourism websites, examine their brief biography, and observe images chosen by the cultural producer (See Figure 5). These interactions are more complex than this brief explanation, but this grounds the fundamental and inherently unequal relationship between ethnic tourism advertisers, tourists and Mosuo locals.

When tourism develops in a minority village, tourism authorities must work with the local culture and its ethnicity to make a welcoming entertainment industry. Cultural exoticism is one form of drawing tourists to the area (Yang 2008: 753). This is seen through images on tourism websites that depict beautiful women in ethnic garbs and strong, dark and handsome men participating in a festival performance. These misleading representations of ethnic minorities are often released without any input from the featured ethnic group and are widely disseminated throughout China in other forms such as television programs, ethnic restaurants, and contemporary forms of art and cinema (Gladney 1994).

Cultural producers manipulate authenticity in tourism advertisements to persuade tourists to travel to Lugu Lake. One's perception of "authentic" Mosuo culture is inspired by scavenging through websites, looking through brochures, and seeing advertisements in train stations. Many of these forms are produced by advertisers, giving them an extensive influence in constructing a tourist's desire for authenticity. With this in mind, all forms of advertising create the perceived

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authenticity. The advertisement plays a major role in ethnic tourism process by motivating the tourist to visit Lugu Lake and influencing the locals to perform their culture like it is portrayed in the media. This shows another perspective as to how the cultural producer holds a higher position of power in the tourism system.
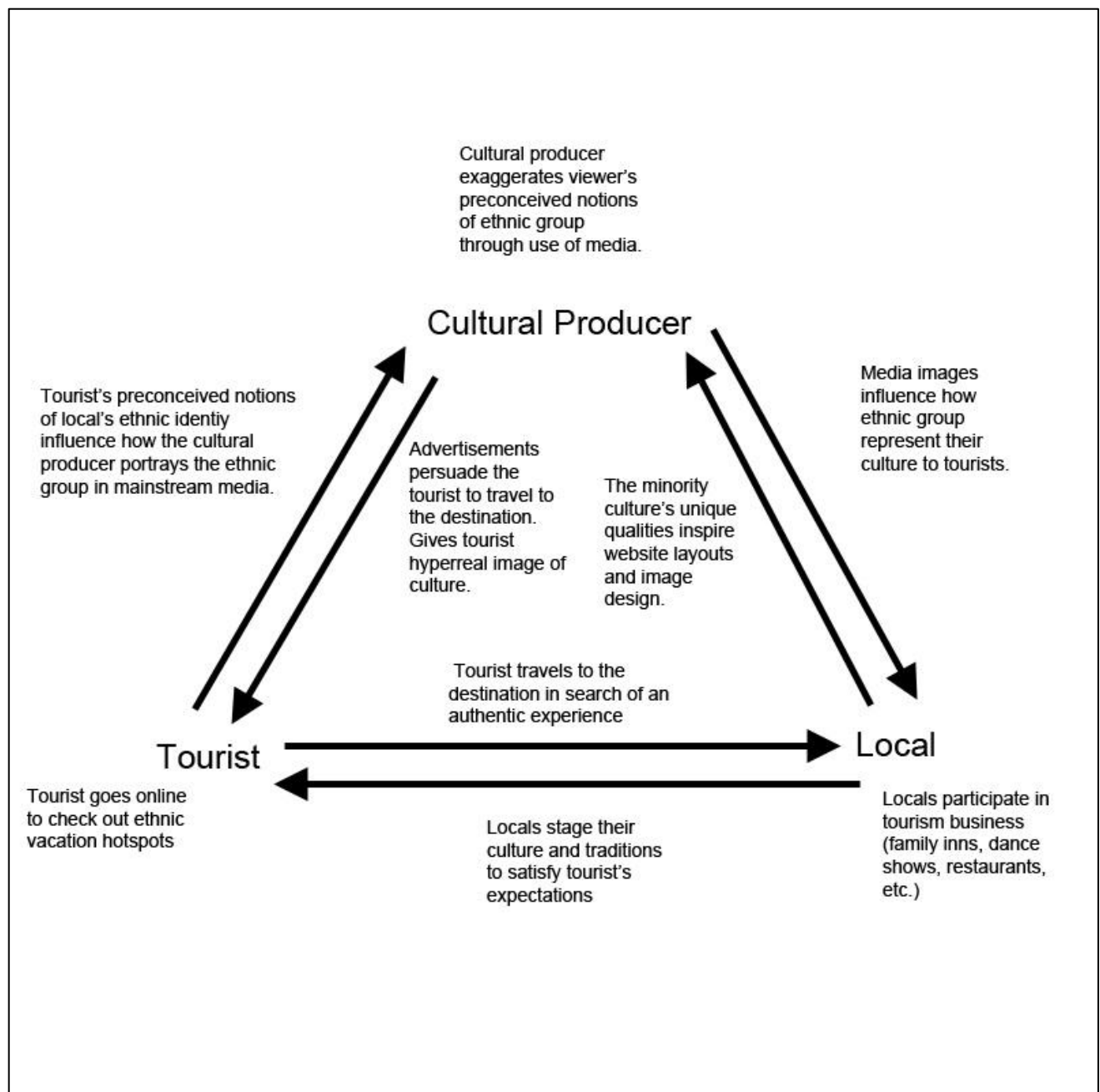

Figure 4. Power Relations in Ethnic Tourism System Explained

The next section will give a more descriptive explanation of the Mosuo people, the methods for this research, and a discussion of my results.

4.0 RE-IMAGED MOSUO CULTURE

4.1 "Ways of Being Mosuo:" Discussion on ethnicity and tourism

The Mosuo population is split in half between Yunnan and Sichuan provinces due to the Communist Party imposing the *minzu* system [3] in the 1950s. This system cataloged and distributed PRC's ethnic minority groups. The party created a uniform system of categorizing ethnicity by grouping minorities by commonalities in territory, language, religion, economy, culture, and other ethnic features (Gladney 1998). This new system was supposed to simplify ethnicity by categorizing the diverse population; however, "the imposition of the *minzu* system further complicated it…and added another level of complexity that consists of the relationship of the local groups and their preexisting identities to the larger identities of the *minzu* system" (Harrell 2000: 313). Thus if there were many ways of "being Mosuo" in Lugu Lake before 1950, then this new system introduced even more ways of being ethnic. Now the Mosuo have two separate ethnic identities—the government's official ethnic distribution as Naxi/Mongolian and the locally understood identity. Stevan Harrell (2001) suggests that in southwest China, ethnic identity varies as it continuously interacts between local, national, and cosmopolitan discourses of ethnicity. The Mosuo encounter this issue as they fashion their own narratives within a context of state policies and reportage (Walsh 2005).

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[3] *Minzu* (民族) is a Chinese term that translates to "nationality" or "ethnic group."

Dru Gladney distinguishes the *minzu system* from simplifying Chinese ethnic categorization to being a form of nation building for the Han majority, enhancing Han identity by contrasting the majority with the "Others." He writes:

> "...these 'inventions of tradition' (Hobsbawn 1983: 4), whether cultural or political, are better understood as negotiations over, and reinterpretations of, symbolic representations of power and identity—an unceasing process that becomes particularly salient when the nation-state takes upon itself the task of legislating national identity, ethnicizing minorities as a means for homogenizing majority" (Gladney 1998: 119)

Gladney mentions that the concept of Han is a recent phenomenon dating back to Sun Yat-sen when he introduced foreign nationalism into a domestic context in the early 1900s. He also notes that contemporary Chinese and Western scholars often do no challenge the concept of Han, but still contest the identities and official distributions of ethnic minorities. Gladney's observations fit into how the Mosuo are portrayed in popular Chinese media. The ethnic group is also a tool used by cultural producers to distinguish Han identity from Mosuo's unique culture.

Mosuo culture has been publicized and reimaged to both domestic and international audiences. Stevan Harrell (2001) describes how this phenomenon of being infinitely reimaged has transformed the "matrilineal Naze's[4]" cultural solidarity from the habitual to the *invented*:

> The matrilineal Naze have...a strong cultural basis for in-group solidarity. It seems to me that the nature of this cultural solidarity lies somewhere between the habitual and the invented: it is certainly habitual in the sense that it is ingrained and, in the core areas around Lugu Lake, anyways, relatively unquestioned. But this is not because of any ignorance of the alternatives— *because* the Naze have been portrayed in so many ways by outsiders, and because they are aware of these portrayals, and the portrayals have moved their social system at least part way from the realm of habitual to the realm of invented, or at least consciously promoted (p. 318).

Ethnic tourism advertising motivates the tourist's desire to experience an "exotic" culture and travel a far distance to satisfy their escape from modernization. Though there are guidebooks

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[4] Another way of addressing the Mosuo people of Lugu Lake, Ninglang County, Yunnan Province, China.

and brochures that are accessible at libraries and other public spaces, the Internet is likely the most convenient resource to search for travel destinations. Like brochures, a website is also finely crafted to persuade the reader to visit the area. Using strategic choice of pictures (header photos and/or animations), cultural descriptions, and travel information (pricing, length of travel and stay, etc.), certain aspects of Mosuo culture are emphasized more than others. These include their unique pairing system, matrilineal society, and their large families. This thesis will examine three aspects of Mosuo society that are objectified through online advertising:

1) Lugu lake

2) Mosuo "girls"

3) Mosuo men

These three "objects" are mentioned and imaged the most in tourism websites. Knowing this, it is important to analyze what exactly the tourism industry is trying to "sell" with these images and language. Examining these documents is crucial in further understanding ethnic tourism advertising, the visitor's development of desire, and the pursuit for authenticity.

4.2 Methods

This research was conducted primarily through the use of the Internet, with the addition of anecdotal evidence from my experiences studying abroad. Due to financial and time related limitations, I was unable to travel to Lugu Lake during the duration of my Bachelor of Philosophy period of research. Instead, I took what research and experiences I have gathered from my time in China and am using it to support and inform my research today. This study analyzed images and texts on tourism websites advertising the Mosuo by conducting both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitatively, I tallied the proportion of women versus

men in images, the number of landscape shots, and the number of times certain adjectives or nouns were used to describe the Mosuo people, culture, and environment. Qualitatively, I examined which adjectives were used most within selected documents, as well as closely examined images for shared details.

It is important to conduct quantitative content analysis because it "allows researchers to make…generalizations about visual and other forms of representation, on the basis of reliable classification and observation" (Bell 2001: 34). With these generalizations, sociologists can better understand how dominant ideologies shape contemporary society and cultural representation. Starosta (1984) explains:

> Content analysis translates frequency of occurrence of certain symbols into summary judgments and comparisons of content of the discourse…whatever "means" will presumably take up space and/or time; hence, the greater that space and/or time, the greater the meaning's significance (p. 185).

This kind of analysis is primarily used to prove hypothesized relationships, not to discover emergent patterns. These relationships, meanings, and patterns seldom appear all at once. Instead, they emerge and become clearer through constant comparison and investigation over a period of time (Altheide 1996:10-16). This form of analysis helped discover which descriptors are used the most in describing the Mosuo people and showed how tourism websites closely associated some words with the ethnic group.

Rather than following a positivist convention, qualitative content analysis contrasts with quantitative methods because it focuses on collecting numerical and *narrative* data. "Although items and topics can still being counted and put in emergent categories, it is also important to provide good descriptive information" (Altheide 1996: 17). Qualitative content analysis provides a broader spectrum of analysis, discovery, and comparison by incorporating ethnographic details

that quantitative analysis ignores. By using this content analysis, a researcher can examine the minute details, such as setting, styles, images, meanings, and nuances.

What is the importance of analyzing tourism websites? David Altheide (1996) notes: "Documents enable us to place symbolic meaning in context, track the process of its creation and influence on social definitions, let our understanding emerge through detailed investigation, and even use our understanding from the study of documents to change some social activities, including the production of certain documents"(12). Studying tourism advertisements (brochures, website ads, billboards, and other documents) help scholars understand how the tourists might conceive of the ethnic "Other."

This research also utilizes Erving Goffman's "framing analysis" to examine how objects/peoples are being imaged, or "framed," by website creators. How does the advertiser want the readers to view the image? Which audience is being advertised to the most? "Frames" are the focus or perspective for discussing a particular event. An example would be discussing the treatment of illegal drug use as a "public health issue" as opposed to a "criminal justice issue." This example shows that there are two (or even more) frames that entail a way of discussing the problem. US citizens watch, read, and see such frames on certain issues everyday through magazines, television, and advertisements.

This research examines how both online images and documents of the Mosuo are framed for Chinese Internet users by looking at eleven tourism websites, which consist of: ten private travel agency websites and one government website. Private travel companies took up the majority of the examined websites (most stationed in Kunming, Yunnan Province and Chengdu, Sichuan Province). Even though private companies host most of the websites, Nyíri (2006) notes that almost all travel agencies in China are state-owned, "making the travel business one of the

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least free sectors of the retail economy" (72). Therefore, the government is always a factor in designing website layouts and choosing language.

Google.com and Baidu.com (a Chinese search engine) served as the main search engines used to find the sample of websites. This methodology follows the actions average Chinese Internet users would take to find travel information about the Mosuo and Lugu Lake. Each tourist has their own reason for travelling to Lugu Lake, but the most likely reasons for looking up Lugu Lake online would be due to a friend's recommendation or reading a newspaper/magazine/online article. The Internet is becoming more and more accessible to use in China. "The number of Internet users in China reached 450 million by the end of [2010], up 20.3 percent year-on-year" (Wang 2010). Due the accessibility of the Internet, it is one of the most common forms of gathering information and organizing a trip. Since the Internet is a common tool in China, it is significant to examine which websites are given preference in popular search engines.

The keywords I used to search through Google.com and Baidu.com were "Mosuo" and "Lugu *hu* (lake)." I choose the first eleven tourism websites that popped up on the search, considering them as the most often looked at sites for Lugu Lake. This was determined due to its placement on the first few pages of the search engine. After translating the websites culture and travel sections, as well as analyzing its images, I conducted a framing analysis by categorizing the website's language into different "frames." I quantitatively analyzed the number of times an image of a subject or landscape appeared on a webpage.

All the websites in this study are in Mandarin. I translated all of the websites and documents, with some help from some faculty and friends who are native speakers. Mr. Shih

Hsiang Sung of the University of Pittsburgh's Anthropology Department also explained the cultural context of some online documents.

During the course of my research, I faced a couple of challenges that limited some of my findings. Due to time constraints, I only analyzed eleven websites, all of which are in Chinese. Due to my limited language abilities, translation consumed much more of my time than expected. These factors led to my smaller than hoped for sample. At the same time, the results still give some insight on the common language used to describe the ethnic group. In the future, I plan to continue my research and gather an even larger sample to study the differences between Western and Chinese language in advertising the Mosuo and other ethnic groups. This research is considered a case study and will hopefully add to the work of other ethnic tourism scholars conducting content analysis on these kinds of advertisements.

The next section will share the quantitative results accumulated from the websites' images and texts. Sections 4.4-4.7 of this thesis will be qualitative analysis and discussion.

4.3 Results

Within the sample of eleven websites, I translated and highlighted the commonly used words (primarily adjectives and nouns). After analyzing how the word was used in the sentence to describe the Mosuo people or Lugu Lake, I categorized the words into a related frame. The first table shows the most utilized frames and its most common words (see Table 1). For example, the first frame noted in the table, "mysterious," was tallied by counting the number of times "mysterious" (*shenmi*) and "mystical" (*shenqi*) were mentioned, as well as counting the number of phrases that signified Lugu Lake as "dreamlike" or "another world different from *our own*," a place that countered reality. The same methodology was used for the other frames noted

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in Table 1. The total was tallied by the number of times words of the same frame were used in
the documents (see Table 2).

Table 1. Commonly Used Words in Frame Analysis

Frame	Commonly Used Word	Total
Mysterious	Mysterious (*shenmi*)	17
	Mystical (*shenqi*)	5
	Another World (*biede shijie)*	6
	Dream-like (*xiaxiang*)	3
	Fairly Land (*péngláixiānjìng*)	3
Ancient	Ancient (*gulao*)	12
	Primitive (*yuanshi*)	9
	Simple (*gupu*)	9
	Pure/Honest (*chunhou*)	3
	Living Fossil (*huohuashi*)	2*
Romantic	Partner ("*a xia*" 阿夏)	9
	Freedom (*ziyou*)	6
	Love (*aiqing*)	4
	Affectionate (duoqing)	4
	Beautiful (*mei*)	4
	Romantic (*langman*)	3
Not Modern	Distant (*yuanfang/youyuan/ yuanlixiaoshi*)	9
	Tranquil (*ningjing*)	6
Nature	Natural (*ziran/tianran*)	23
	Beautiful (*meili*)	17
	Bountiful (*fengfu*)	14
Unique	Precious (*baogui/mingzhu*)	13
	Unique (*dute*)	12
	Unusual (*qite/teshu*)	6
	Rare (*zhenxi*)	4
Cultural	Maternal/Matriarchal (*muxi*)	22
	Walking Marriage (*zouhun*)	17
	"Kingdom of Women" (*nv'er guo*)	14

*In the other categories, any word used less than 3 times was not included in the dataset. However, the use of "living fossil" is historically significant in describing the Mosuo people. It was a term commonly used to describe the ethnic group when Chinese anthropologists "discovered" them in the mid-twentieth century. It is significant to this study that this phrasing is still being used.

Table 2. Quantitative Analysis on Website Language—Totals

Frame	Total
Mysterious	34
Ancient	35
Romantic*	30
Not Modern	15
Nature	54
Unique	35
Cultural	53

* The "Romantic" category was most difficult to categorize because each website described Mosuo love culture with different words and phrases. The tallied results do not accurately show of the number of instances romantic language was used. Though the quantitative analysis did not register the magnitude of romantic language, the qualitative analysis in the next section will.

It should be noted that most of the online tourism websites utilized multiple frames in one document. This was either done with the use of separate paragraphs, or a text and image combination. In terms of language, the most commonly used frame was "Nature." The "beauty" (*meili*) of Lugu Lake, its "treasured" (*baogui*) islands, the "dense" (*maomi*) forests, and "bountiful" (*fengfu*) wildlife were words widely used in all of the websites, except for two private travel company sites: one focused on Lugu Lake's "primitive" and "ancient" culture, while the other focused on the cultural aspects of Lugu Lake, linking it with the "Romantic" frame.

I also analyzed all the images utilized on each website by first distributing them into separate categories: men, woman, and landscape:

Table 3. Number of Imaged Subjects/Objects

Object Imaged	Total
Nature	64
Women	16
Men	10
Both	2
Other	13

This study utilized Philip Bell's (2001) ethnomethodological approach to analyze gendered bodies and its configurations of power in advertisements. Bell utilizes Erving Goffman's (1979) study of "rituals of subordination", which studies how women position themselves in advertisements, such as "head canting" and bashfully bending their knees. He combines Goffman's gender analysis with Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) semiotic study of advertising to create his own list of behavior values most utilized in human subject advertising. The list of "behavior values" includes (Bell 2001):

(a) *Offer/Ideal:* the model depicted offers herself/himself as an idealized exemplar of a class or attitude, looking away from the viewer (for example, the statuesque pose of a female model displaying clothes)

(b) *Demand/affiliation* (equality): model looks at the viewer, smiling

(c) *Demand/submission:* model looks down at viewer, not smiling

(d) *Demand/seduction:* model looks up at the viewer, head canted, smiling or 'pouting'

(e) None of the above

Table 4. Behavior Values of Imaged Mosuo

Behavior Values	Total
Offer/Ideal	17
Demand/Affiliation	6
Demand/Submission	0
Demand/Seduction	5
None of the Above	0

This study also utilizes Bell's "social distance" variable (see Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). This variable was inspired by Edward Hall's (1966) discussion of 'proxemics,' or the study of how humans (or animals) use space in social contexts. In his research, he acknowledges, social relations influence the distance we, as human beings, keep from one another. Edward Hall also introduces the concept of invisible boundaries, which we literally and figuratively set to allow certain people to come into our personal space (Kress and van Leeuwen 1966). This theory is useful because the photographer chooses the distance that he/she wants the subject to be from the frame, and the website designer decides which images are most suited for the website: close-ups of Mosuo men and women or distant landscape shots. Social distance of human subjects in images can be divided into six values (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 129-31):

(a) *Intimate:* we see the face or head only
(b) *Close personal:* we take in the head and shoulders
(c) *Far personal:* we see the other person from the waist up
(d) *Close social distance:* we see the whole figure.
(e) *Far social:* we see the whole figure with space around it
(f) *Public:* we can see the torso of at least four or five people

Table 5. Social Distance Values Quantitative Results

Social Distance Values	Total
Intimate	0
Close Personal	1
Far Personal	12
Close Social	4
Far Social	1
Public	10

Kress and van Leeuwan (1966) connects Hall's theory with analyzing magazine covers: "It is clear that these fields of vision correspond closely to the traditional definitions of [frame size] in film and television, in other words, that the visual system of size of frame derives from the 'proxemics,' as Hall calls it, of everyday face-to-face interaction." This connection can also be used to analyze tourism website advertisements and image layouts which is beneficial to anthropologists because this can open up different ways of viewing how gender and sexuality is manipulated in advertisements. Thus, observing the social distance and behavioral values brings up a broader form of analysis to the researcher.

To my surprise, the majority of images (and language) from the sample focused on nature—Lugu Lake and its surrounding landscape. I expected to see many more images focusing on women The results show that nature and landscapes shots are the more popular image used in Lugu Lake ethnic tourism websites. Of the images of women, the majority featured young ladies. For the men, the majority of images displayed older, middle-aged men (around early forties). Most of the images portrayed an "ideal" Mosuo person. For instance, many images included young woman standing and looking out at the blue waters of Lugu Lake and older man rowing

the famous pig trough boats across the lake. The five images that took on the "demand/seduction" category consisted of a handsome, older Mosuo man, looking deeply into the camera. The image was used multiple times on one website. The images that showed both sexes consisted of them drifting in a pig trough boat, hinting that the two were "*a-xia*" (partners). The majority of the images were either considered "far personal," far enough so that the subject could be looked at comfortably, yet close enough to feel connected to his/hers presence (see Figure 6).
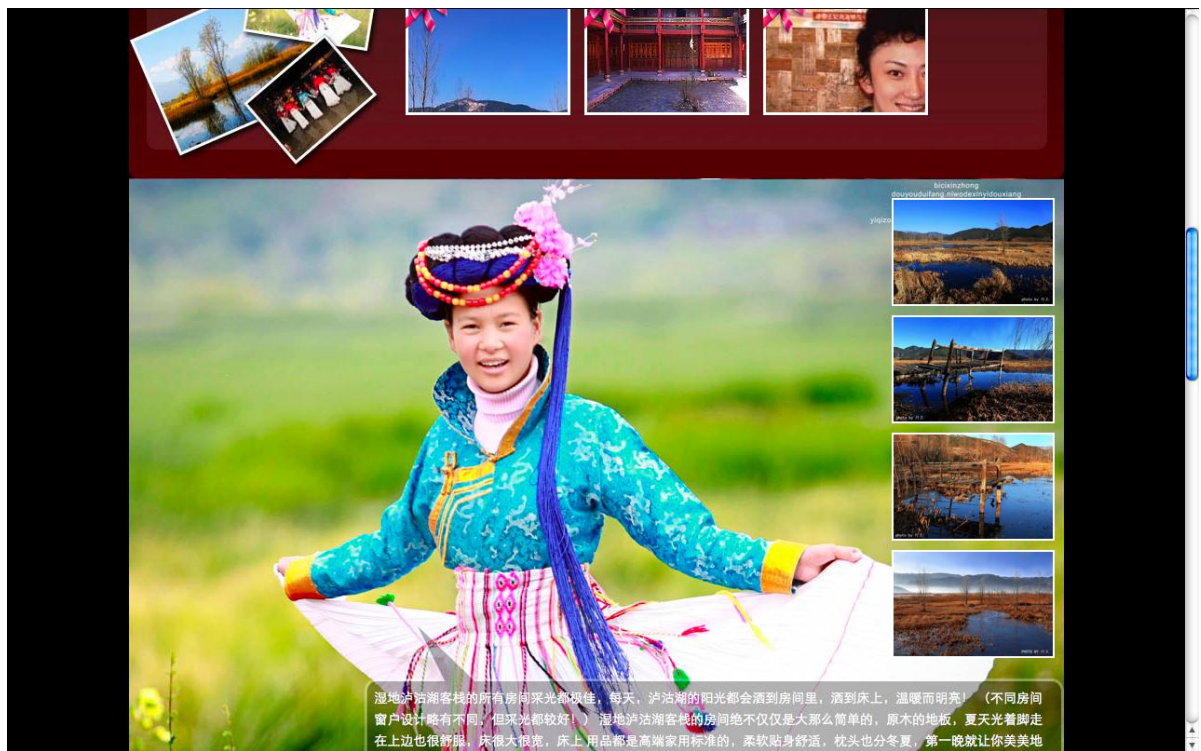

Figure 5. Example of "Demand/Affiliation," "far personal" image (www.scluguhu.com/)

The study helped determine what specific images and language are used the most on tourism websites. Websites utilized multiple frames in their articles, the second most common being the "culture" frame, which explained the local culture. This was sometimes done either

matter-of-factly, but the majority of the descriptions about *tisese* exaggerated aspects of "young love" and "non-committal" relationships. The next most popular frames were: the "Unique" frame, which distinguished Mosuo culture from Han society by announcing it as "one of a kind" or "precious," and the "Mysterious" frame, which emphasized on Lugu Lake's "mystical" and "unreal" qualities, as if it were a "dreamland."

This leads to the main focus, the "Romantic" frame. While this frame was not at the top of the table, it was the most scattered in dialogue. Few words were used over and over again, rather each website described Mosuo love in different ways. The quotes that begin sections 4.3-4.5 hopefully paint a better picture of what kind of romantic language was used to describe Lugu Lake, Mosuo *girls*, and Mosou men.

4.4 Re-Imaged Lugu Lake: A Gendered "Scenic Spot"

*"Taking in the mountains, the water, the sky, and Lugu Lake, the environment makes a lasting impression on you…making one feel as if they have entered a land of dreams."(*www.scluguhu.com/)

"Rich in dense forests, beautiful landscapes, fresh air, and enchanting scenery, the Mosuo people regard Lugu Lake as 'mother lake.' It has also been regarded by people as 'fairyland.'"
(www.7c6u.cn)

Among the tourism websites studied, a common trend was to treat Lugu Lake as a place of dreams, a place too beautiful that it is unreal. With this effect, the environment is seen as a place of mystery: "At the border of Southwest Sichuan and Northwest Yunnan lays a mysterious and ancient lake, where an ancient ethnic group resides—the Mosuo people (dreams-travel.com)" In these websites, the cultural producers utilized Lugu Lake as an object of beauty, desire, and primitivity, as well as a place far away from the cities (*yuanli xiaoshi*). Unlike the common Han urbanite tourist, Lugu Lake and its people "lack" modernization and appear to live

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in a "simpler (*gupu*)" time before modern development. "Central to tourist consumption…is to look individually or collectively upon aspects of landscape or townscape which are distinctive, which signify an experience which contrasts with everyday experience. It is that gaze which gives a particular heightening to other elements of that experience, particular to the sensual" (Urry 1990: 26). For the Chinese tourism industry, advertisers use this strategy to sell a place that is different from large cities, a change of pace and scenery.

In the sample, Lugu Lake is called a "scenic spot (*jingdian*)" sixteen times. Brook (1998) describes a scenic spot as "an established and well-defined view onto a known landscape, not a view that the artist selects and defines himself" (59, taken from Nyíri 2006). It is a place that has already been given boundaries and definitions, lacks depth, and is simply something that is consumed (see Figure 7).

Figure 6. Gazing at Lugu Lake (http://www.yododo.com/)

Another approach used by tourism advertisers is to describe Lugu Lake with *gendered* language. In the advertisements, Lugu Lake is given a feminine presence. This is evident in the

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language used to describe it: "mysterious," "mystical," "beautiful," and "Mother Lake." One instance described how, "*She* (Lugu Lake) is like a simple, tranquil sleeping beauty (italics added) (76cu.cn)." While the mountains around the lake are often given masculine features—"mighty, steep mountains"—the lake itself is portrayed as "pure." These are submissive qualities. The scenic spot can be seen as a beautiful and mysterious woman, a gendered landscape that is consumed by the tourist's eye.

The feminine presence has lingered over descriptions of nature for centuries in the Western hemisphere, *i.e.* Mother Nature, and the Mosuo have witnessed a similar phenomenon with how the Han majority views "Mother Lake" and the "Kingdom of Women." This analysis connects to Ortner's (1974) famous study on the perception of gender within nature: "Culture of some level of awareness asserts itself to not only be distinct from but superior to nature, and that sense of distinctiveness and superiority rests precisely on the ability to transform—to "socialize" and "culturalize"—nature…Women are being…symbolically associated with nature, as opposed to men, who are identified with culture" (Ortner 1974: 73). Mosuo men do not have a superior role in the way they and their environment are advertised, they are also sexualized. The tourism authorities and cultural producers are majority Han Chinese and are considered the "socializer" in Ortner's context. "Gendered tourists, gendered hosts, gendered tourism marketing and gendered tourism objects reveal power differences between women and men which privilege male views and which have significant impacts on tourism image and promotion" (Wearing & Wearing 1996: 231-231). The power dynamic between the three actors—cultural producer, local, and tourist—primarily privileges the male perspective, hence the over feminization of the landscape and Mosuo culture.

Pritchard and Morgan (2000) argue that landscapes are "shaped by the discourses of patriarchy and (hetero)sexuality and that the language of tourism promotion is scripted for a male heterosexual audience" (886). In addition, they argue that the ways in which landscapes and destinations are imaged influence how the examined ethnic group is perceived. They examined the language and images used to advertise Fiji, Seychelles, and Tahiti to tourists:

> Fiji offers sensual feminine landscape which invites the tourist to discover "water falls tumbling through *virgin forests*…the scent of *wild, exotic blooms*…*Dreams* and *fantasies*?—Fiji realities" (Fiji Visitors Bureau 1995:22). Potential tourists are told the Seychelles offer "seas that were made for pleasure" (Seychelles Tourist Office 1995) and that Tahiti is "often called 'The Island of Love'" (Tahite Tourisme 1996:37). Indeed, "The Islands of Tahiti…have *allured*, *inspired* and *enamored* a wide range of visitors…[as] These are islands of *beauty*, of *love* and of *passion*" (Tahite Tourisme 1996:3). (Pritchard & Morgan 2000: 895, italics added)

The italicized words are also descriptions used in the eleven websites that describe Lugu Lake. The Caribbean Islands (and other "exotic" places around the world) encounter the same sexualized and gendered language placed upon their culture and environment. Lugu Lake and the Caribbean Islands are "landscapes which are feminine and attractive, but also powerless and vulnerable, epitomized by images of young girls" (Morgan and Pritchard 2000: 896). Lugu Lake is also portrayed as a young woman, "a tranquil sleeping beauty." This feminization of the landscape also places it in a marginalized position, making it much less powerful than the "mighty" mountains that surround the lake.

The feminized descriptions and beautiful landscape shots target the male Han Chinese audience, providing a patriarchal discourse in the presentation of the Mosuo environment. "Mother Lake" is an imaged commodity that lacks agency over its representation and is powerless to the *cultural* producer. In this context, nature becomes an exotic object that is consumed by the tourist. "The tour brochure directs expectations, influences perceptions, and thereby provides a preconceived landscape for the tourist to "discover." Thus, the directed

landscape becomes the real landscape and as Peirce Lewis…notes, "The advertisement…becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy" (Weightman 1987: 230). The descriptions of the lake and its surroundings leave the environment in a lower position than the tourist, who can consume it by taking photographs, experience it by riding a pig trough boat, and penetrate it by hiking into the "virgin forests". One of the websites even hinted that a young Mosuo woman may "accompany" you to one of the mountains.

In tourism advertisements, the cultural producer holds the most power in representing the landscape. They give the tourist the incentive to experience the land and fulfill their expectations when they arrive for their short visit. This is often successful by using Photoshop to saturate the colors in landscape photos, extenuating the "blueness" of Lugu Lake and the "greenness" of the surrounding hilly forests. This inspires false perceptions of Lugu Lake and the landscape becomes encased and frozen within the brochure and website, suffocating any form of change or modernization. The "dream-like" and "primitive" language used in describing the area indirectly promotes observing minority culture in a similar light.

Figure 7. "Mystical" Lugu Lake (Baidu.com)

4.5 Re-Imaged Mosuo "Girls:" An Exoticized Commodity

"Lugu Lake has beautiful mountains, beautiful water, and more importantly, beautiful woman"
(Baidu.com).

"Look! That far off approaching pig-trough boat, the young woman beckons you and yells: 'Ah!
Friend, don't go just yet, accompany me to West Mountain during the moonlight'" (www.lghly.com).

"Mosuo woman are the people who know best how to love. In their perspective, money and
position in society are insignificant matters. When choosing a male partner, they pay more attention to
appearance and a man's wisdom…so long as she falls in love with her partner, one can boldly love"
(www.scluguhu.com).

"Sexual imagery, when used to depict the desirability of places in such a way, says a great deal about the gendered nature of the marketing agents and their fantasies…the sexual myths and fantasies extolled in the tourism promotion lead to the construction of these ideas in the hearts and minds of tourists (Kinnaird and Hall 1994: 214, taken from Pritchard & Morgan 2000). The quotes above were taken from the sample of websites. The quotes exemplify how the websites' advertisers utilized young women and their sexuality to persuade male tourists to travel to Lugu Lake.

Eileen Walsh (2005) argues that, due to tourism and state policy that categorized Mosuo gender practices, gender has become more salient in their culture. This salience has led to "representations of Mosuo ethnicity built around notions of women freely available for sex, to whom present lovers have no future commitments, or of a land where woman rule. Matriarchy and sexual availability are central in tourists' desire to visit the Mosuo" (450). She also mentions that the practice of tourism has led to larger Lugu Lake tourist towns reinventing their nickname "*Nü'er Guo"* from meaning "Kingdom of Women" to instead the "Kingdom of Daughters," thus emphasizing Mosuo *girls,* rather than Mosuo women. Walsh (2005) says, "though the literary meaning of '*nü'er'* is 'women,' and the popular recognition of Nü'er Guo is of a 'Women's

Country,' I wonder if the more common meaning of nü'er, 'daughter' is slipping into an interpretation of the area's culture" (465). Marketing takes advantage of this ambiguity as seen in the results and the quotes above. Of Mosuo females who appeared on a website, the majority were young (early to mid-twenties) (see Figure 9, 10 & 11).

Figure 8. Young Mosuo Woman (www.xz0891.com)   **Figure 9.** Young Mosuo Woman (*ibid.*)

Figure 10. One of the few imaged Older Mosuo Woman (www.Baidu.com)

One of the websites makes an apparent difference between young Mosuo "girls" and Mosuo "men." It reads:

Mosuo *girls* (nü'er) are the world's most free-spirited and God's most precious of *girls*. Every night, an affectionate lover will make a difficult journey to meet her, whisper loving words, and sing love songs. The girls (*tamen*) love feely, have free partnership, and rule their own destinies. They are as free as a bird flying over the hills and mountainside, unlike a caged peacock. They are not required to attach themselves to a *man*'s (*nanren*) life. If the *man* and *girl* (*tamen*) *are* suitable for one another, they stay together, if not, they separate. (sclugulake.com, italics added)

The italicized words show the clear differentiation between "girl" and "man" in this example. Though the word "nü'er literally translates to "daughter," I interpreted it as "girl" due to popular vernacular. The word "daughter" suggests a young female, especially when contrasted against the word "man." These two words share different levels of power. In this context, the girl, is described as "free-spirited." Though her description seems empowering, her role in the description is an object of the male reader's fantasy. She is not the subject in this story, rather the reader imagines himself as the male Mosuo in this tale's "non-committal" relationship.

In the case of the Mosuo people, the contemporary meaning of "*nü'er guo*" ("The Kingdom of Women" or "Women's Kingdom") has been altered in Mandarin to fit the dominant male Han ideology. In *Journey to the West,* the women were seen as powerful temptresses that attempted to seduce the main characters. The contemporary version of "*Nü'er Guo*" shown in advertisements has transformed these strong, older women to now young, beautiful, flirtatious ethnic *girls.* This change in representation is a conscious decision intended to excite male travellers and draw on their fantasies of pretty girls who believe in "free love." This emphasis on young "nü'er" in advertisements hints at the dominant ideology that influences the cultural producer in designing websites and advertisements, as well as its influence on the tourist gaze on the ethnic group (Urry 1990). "At [Lugu Lake], where ethnicity is imagined and consumed through tourism, Mosuo women are the figurative (and sometimes literal) consumable" (Walsh 2005: 450).

Though Mosuo women are often sexualized commodities in these advertisements, the majority of male tourists who have sexual exchanges (a minority of tourists) in the area do it through the local sex tourism industry. The women involved are primarily Han women dressed in Mosuo ethnic garb. The brothels are normally disguised as beauty salons, karaoke bars, or

other specialized shops. There is no red light district alternative for female tourists. The presence of the industry was obvious is the early 2000s, to the point that local Mosuo men started participating in the district. Walsh (2005) mentions, "because there is only one road into Luoshui, all tourists, before arriving at the village, pass through the red-light district, where they see on display professional sex workers in Mosuo costume" (472). Thus, upon entering Lugu Lake, tourists immediately encountered an unrealistic aspect of the Mosuo sex culture. Newly arrived tourists often did not know where the sex workers are from. Most workers were likely not Mosuo and their activity added to the sexualized perception of local "girls." Romantic and misleading language is already used to describe local "girls" in brochures and online advertisements, but the presence of the sex tourism industry further impacted their image. In the summer of 2004, the government cracked down on the district, but sex workers are returning to the area (*ibid.*).

Figure 11. Mosuo nü'er (www.scluguhu.com)

In the media, the Mosuo are a feminized ethnic group. Though this thesis' sample is small, building on earlier studies, I argue that the media has imposed a gendered identity on the Mosuo people that focuses on Mosuo women rather than Mosuo men. In a heterosexual male's gaze, an ethnic woman is the assumed desirable object in an image. The man is often not. "Most [tourism marketing material] 'depend on femininity, masculinity, and heterosexuality to make their appeals and achieve their goals' (Enloe 1989: 32). These representations of gender and heterosexuality have led to women being represented as exoticized commodities which are there to be experienced" (Pritchard & Morgan 2000: 891). The supposed sexuality of the Mosuo girls is a central theme used to promote their culture and persuade tourists to visit Lugu Lake. This emphasis on their sexuality has not only made young Mosuo *nü'er* an object of desire, but also led to a feminized Mosuo identity.

It is not groundbreaking in ethnic tourism and advertising studies to argue that there is an over-sexualization of women in tourism advertisements (see Pritchard & Morgan 2000 for more examples). Others may argue against the observation that a patriarchal ideology is manipulating mainstream advertising of ethnic women. However, excessive analysis on advertising imagery confirms "the range of images used to represent women has been and continues to be very narrow." This still persists in advertising, especially in regards to the ethnic "Other." The implications these representations have on Mosuo ethnic identity and other ethnic groups are worthwhile for academic study and close analysis. This will be further discussed in the next section.

4.6 Re-Imaged Mosuo Men: Sensualized Masculinity

"Mosuo men are the world's most unrestrained men. All year round, these handsome and burly Mosuo think about romantic endeavors." (www.scluguhu.com)

"Late at night, Lugu Lake has yet to slumber. A small fire is jumping about along the lakeside. That is where young Mosuo lovers congregate. Day after day, year after year, the young Mosuo live out their youth in this simple and joyful manner." (*ibid.*)

Figure 12. Older Mosuo Man, "Demand/Seduction" category (www.scluguhu.com)

One website out of the sample not only emphasized on the sexuality of young Mosuo girls, but also focused on the sexuality of "handsome" Mosuo men (quoted above). In this website, the text described the Mosuo male as a sexual being and that they understand love: "Mosuo men understand that love is not a battlefield or war. It is meant to be civil and peaceful. The deepest level of love is fragile, only gentleness and sweetness can conquer it" (*ibid*). There are two audiences that are being targeted by this language: Chinese men and older Chinese

women. Male readers can imagine themselves in the body of the "burly" Mosuo man in these romantic tales. The other readers, Chinese women, visualize the romantic descriptions of tall, handsome, desirable men. This builds the Chinese women's desire to visit Lugu Lake, just like how the sexualized images and language of Mosuo "girls" do the same for male readers. This female audience is often overlooked in content analysis since ethnic women are sexualized in advertisements more often than men. This audience is important to also analyze because it helps scholars develop a better understanding of how masculinity of the ethnic "other" is being marketed.

"When minority men are portrayed…they are generally exoticised as strong and virile, practicing strange and humorous customs, or possessing extraordinary physical abilities in sport [and] work" (Gladney 2002, taken from Nyíri 2006). This kind of activity was mentioned in Section 2.3, where the Lisu male climbs the ladder of sharp swords and stands at the top for several minutes as tourists gawk at his feat and masculinity (see Figure 3). This kind of situation is often the case for Mosuo males in tourism advertisements. The sample website quoted above followed this pattern as well by focusing the readers attention on the male body, as well as his masculinity and sexuality.

Mosuo men are in a similar position as imaged Mosuo females—the figuratively consumed subject. Men are described as strong, "objects of desire" for female readers to consume and male readers to imagine themselves in their position. While "tourism brochure representations of men tend to be associated with action, power, and ownership…representations of women tend to be associated with passivity [and] availability…women are often used to promote the exoticized nature of destinations" (Pritchard & Morgan 2000: 889). While this may

be true in some cases, I further argue that online tourism sites also utilize Mosuo males' perceived masculinity as a highly sexualized commodity.

When the sample websites' depicted on Mosuo men, the sites typically focused on their physical features and "romantic" lifestyle. When the websites noted the culture's unique pairing system, the majority of them emphasized on the non-committal ("no marriage") aspect of *tisese*. This phrase appeared eight times in seven websites (*nan bu qu, nü bu jia or nan bu hun, nü bu jia, ziyuan jiehe*). The exaggerated emphasis of "non-committal" relationships inaccurately describes *tisese* relationships. Couples who continue *tisese* do not have any "formal recognition" of their relationship. Often, they are together for many years to even entire lifetimes. It is common for websites to emphasize "free love" because of its exotic or romantic qualities, unlike the relatively conservative contemporary Han society. The media portray Mosuo women as "unrestrained," which is the opposite for Han women whom are seen as "the objects and not initiators of sexual encounters and in which elite male identities are constructed around ideas of [the consumption of women]" (Walsh 2005: 472). This emphasis on uncommitted relationships may build desire for both male readers and female readers.

According to Eileen Walsh (2005), Chinese female tourists are interested in "tasting local men." The over-sensualized image of Mosuo masculinity may be contributing to this interest:

> Frequently women tourists imagine Mosuo men as adventurous and seductive and, like other ethnic minorities, uncorrupted by modern life, close to nature, and more sexual…However, increasing numbers of local men are interested in relations with visiting women, and likewise the number of visiting women looking for local men has increased dramatically. By summer of 2005, local women were now openly resentful of the many local men sleeping with visiting women…the Women's Representative (interview, 2005) discussed this as one of the negative impacts of tourism for local women (Walsh 2005: 474).

Many female tourists likely visited Mosuo tourism websites before travelling to Lugu Lake. Many of the sampled websites mentioned *tisese* and Mosuo love culture. These websites and others that exoticize Mosuo men (and other forms of media) possibly played on female tourists'

Figure 13. A couple rowing on the lake (www.sozhen.com)

sexual curiosity. And, according to Walsh's article, female tourists do have the possibility of participating in *tisese*. This promotes this behavior and impacts Mosuo local pairing system.

These actions are not changing the tourists' experiences because they *expected* this behavior; however, these actions are impacting Mosuo culture, identity, and cultural representation. "Instead of tourists being changed by their visits to Lugu Lake and Mosuo culture, the large change is in the other direction: the sexualization of Mosuo culture because of tourism" (475). Tourism websites and other forms of media continue to sexualize the ethnic group, to the point that visitors come with expectations of promiscuity. The increase of sexual relations between outsiders and Mosuo men is contributing to this perception and is gradually changing how the locals view themselves:

> Residents use banter and titillation to manage encounters and avoid directly engaging tourists about sexuality while satisfying tourist' desire. The sexualization of Mosuo culture—through images, words, and interactions that insinuate sex—does not affect tourists alone. Because the site

of tourism is the village, even those not engaged in tourist activities still hear and see these events on their doorsteps daily[5] (*ibid.*)

From their dominant position in Mosuo cultural representation, cultural producers advertise the unique pairing system. Sometimes the subject is advertised in a matter-of-fact tone, but it is often overly sensualized. Following the three actor's interactions in Diagram 1, these perceptions will continue to affect how locals appease visitors and verbally represent their culture. This circle of interaction will not stop until these overly sensual images and sexualized language is reduced in Mosuo rhetoric.

Figure 14. "Ideal" Mosuo male looking out at Lugu Lake on pig-trough boat (www.baidu.com)

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[5] Eileen Walsh (2005) mentions in note 13 that after the crackdown on sex tourism in 2004 and more tourism development has changed the ethos of the area. "It seems to have reduced some of the ethos of sexual titillation at the lake" (482).

5.0 CONCLUSION

"When leaving Lugu Lake, you seem to get a feeling of not wanting to let go. The Mosuo guide sings to us a farewell song: 'Friends, Friend/do not go just yet, do not go/the crystal-clear waters and mountains bow their heads/Lugu Lake will be with you wherever you go, Friend/Take your time, take your time/Never forget your time at Lugu Lake/Ma da mi, Ma da mi!' " (www.scluguhu.com)

The "pearl within the mountains," Lugu Lake features dense forests, fields of blossoming flowers, and diverse wildlife. On the lakeshore, the reader sees a pretty, young Mosuo girl. She wears a bright green blouse with a white skirt, her beaded headdress stands out against the bright blue sky and clear water (see Fig 11). A far off pig-trough boat approaches the reader and the same young woman beckons you from the boat and yells: "Ah! Friend, don't go just yet, accompany me to West Mountain during the moonlight" (http://www.lghly.com/). An older Mosuo man enters the scene. He is wearing a red colored ethnic shirt and looking straight into the viewer's eye in a charming manner, while rowing the pig-trough boat (Figure 12). The reader feels so close to the man, almost as if they are in the boat with him. Such romantic imagery gives readers a "taste" of Mosuo culture.

Online, the Mosuo culture is frozen in time. In reality, their way of life is dynamic, changing, and modern. Advertisers know what aspects of Mosuo culture are marketable and the residents of Lugu Lake are well aware that particular aspects of their culture sells. The cultural producer displays idyllic descriptions of the area, while the Mosuo perform what is advertised to satisfy tourist desires. "While the Mosuo face representations rife with imbedded contradictions,

they also face the pressures of tourism and policy to accommodate these representations" (Walsh 2005: 450). Like many other ethnic groups in China, they hope to economically develop their area by expanding ethnic tourism, but also at the same time preserve their traditional way of life.

This is where Yang's second key tension of power appears within the ethnic tourism system—*cultural exoticism versus modernity*. "Cultural exoticism draws tourists, yet there are countervailing forces from the community and government agencies to promote political, economic, and cultural integration in mainstream society" (Yang 2008). While the residents of Lugu Lake pin their hopes on the promises of economic change, they face a frozen identity encased in tourism website advertisements and brochures. Oakes (1998) describes how authorities in a small ethnic village in Guizhou "sought to fossilize certain aspects of *minzu* (ethnic) cultural tradition, drawing distinct boundaries around local customs, fixing them in time and space and ensuring that they remain encased as exhibits" (179, taken from Nyíri 2006). This is the case for Mosuo's matrilineal society and *tisese.* However, the bustling lives of Lugu Lake residents contradict these imaged representations and show signs of development (schools, satellite dishes, computers), as well as signs of cultural change (increase in marriages). The local economy primarily relies on ethnic tourism revenue. There is a constant tension between developing local villages and pleasing tourists' demands. Local officials advocate for development, while the national level officials support conservation—Where do the Mosuo fit in this political battle?

The Mosuo tour guides, performers, and pig trough rowers are facing tough challenges within the framework of this power dynamic, but still retain agency over cultural representation on a local level. Even though they and their environment are represented inaccurately in advertisements, and different forces are instructing them to both modernize and stay the same,

they wield the power to impact the tourist. It is up to the tourist to either observe the "performed" culture or explore the underrepresented aspects of Mosuo culture. Scholars noted that Chinese and Western tourists do differ in their travel experiences. A Chinese tourist does not often take into account authenticity as a major factor in reexamining their travel experience. However, Oakes (1998) and Walsh & Swain (2004) share the same opinion that: "Chinese tourists can be seen both as 'more naïve' in that they do not question the authenticity of the sites, and 'more sophisticated,' in that they 'play along' despite being aware of the 'staged' nature" (Nyíri 2006: 83).

The authenticity game the tourists and Mosuo "play" with each other is an interesting phenomenon that perpetuates the existing system. Though Chinese tourists are aware that the culture they paid to participate in is "staged," it does not get in the way of their enjoyment. Is this way of viewing ethnic cultures beneficial or harmful to cultural representation? It would seem more conducive towards preservation to stop staged manifestations and cultural regulations and instead give the locals more agency over their own representation. This may lead to tourists not to expect a "staged" culture and be able to witness a less regulated Mosuo lifestyle. However, it is unclear if the Chinese tourist would prefer staged over "authentic."

This theoretical concern relates to a personal experience. Nearing the end of my study abroad in 2010, my Chinese roommate gifted me with a picture of herself (see Figure 16). At the time, all I saw was my Han roommate wearing an ethnic garb (a common form of entertainment) standing in front of a pagoda at Yunnan's Nationalities Village amusement park. Two years later, while preparing to move out in the summer of 2012, this photo fell out of my old journal. I was surprised to find I could identify some key parts of the photograph. She was wearing a Mosuo outfit and standing in front of a Dai minority pagoda. She is also posing in a peacock stance,

which is famous from the Dai's "Peacock Dance." This comical combination of completely different ethnic cultures baffled me, but also shows how much I have learned about Yunnan ethnic minorities these past two years.

Figure 15. My roommate wearing Mosuo garb in Yunnan Nationalities Village amusement park

At first, I wondered why my roommate would wear a Mosuo outfit and stand in front of a Dai pagoda. Perhaps she thought they were both beautiful? I was not with her when she took this picture, but I have been to the same spot in Yunnan Nationalities Village. Beside the pagoda,

there is a vendor with a wardrobe of Yunnan ethnic minority garbs available for tourist photos. Tourists pay the vendor to take a picture of him/her in front of the pagoda in costume. Though my roommate chose the outfit, it was the vendor that gave her the option to combine ethnic cultures. The vendor also most likely suggested the peacock stance. This combination of the bright red blouse with the black headdress against the white pagoda background created a very pretty picture. In this instance, the cultures were not technically being represented, but in this photograph, were instead portrayed as "pretty" objects, depicting a "pan-Yunnanese" identity.

This picture shows that politics and the aesthetic of ethnic minority culture intertwine within tourism. Nationality folk village theme parks are a good example of how Han visitors reinterpret government-recognized ethnic cultural identity and transform it to fit into their own experience and understanding. How do tourists incorporate the ethnic cultures they visit in the theme park into their permanent memories? My roommate dressed in ethnic garb and took a picture in front of a pagoda to remember her experience at Yunnan Nationalities Village. Others may ride an elephant at the entrance to experience "Dai culture" or climb into a young Mosuo woman's special room to experience Mosuo "love culture." These staged cultural activities are not only controlled by tourist authorities, vendors, but also *reproduced* and *stimulated* by visitors. In this sense, tourists are also cultural producers because they are the ones that continue these "invented traditions" (produced by theme park cultural producers) to serve as placeholders in their memories (Hobsbawn & Ranger 1983).

This relates to Dru Gladney's concept of homogenizing Han culture by contrasting it to colorful ethnic minority lifestyles: "the representation of the minorities in such colorful, romanticized fashion has more to do with constructing a majority discourse, than it does with the minorities themselves" (1994: 94). These activities, such as my roommate wearing Mosuo garbs,

contrast the ambiguous Han identity with those of ethnic "Others." For instance, the Mosuo wear "costumes," while female Han wear pants/shorts/shorts. This dislocated assortment of cultural symbols (ethnic garbs, hand gestures) shows that they are interchangeable in the eye of the majority, thus able to patch together to produce something that is "pretty." Thus, the aesthetic of ethnic culture and politics are enmeshed in this circle of representation.

This photo was taken on the outskirts of Kunming, hours away from Lugu Lake and Xishuang Bana (Dai area). Tourism authorities, local officials, advertisers have no control over the actions of the vendor. He is just taking advantage of the beautiful pagoda replica and the diverse ethnic garbs to entertain tourists. Where do my roommate and this vendor fit in the game of cultural representation? Unaware that she was combining a northern Yunnan ethnic group with a southern one, she just wanted a nice picture to remember the amusement park. The vendor was likely aware, but needed the business. These two are not a part of the battle for cultural representation, but simply participating in the everyday life of the Yunnan Nationalities Village. Their actions reproduce the constructed cultural activities that the cultural producers created, continuing the ethnic tourism power dynamic (see Figure 5).

This image shows that minority culture in China is utilized as a commodity to entertain tourists, but this commoditization does not always impact the portrayed ethnic group. Aspects of Dai culture and Mosuo culture are both very beautiful. The amusement park chooses to build the prettiest parts onto the grounds. These choices entertain tourists, like my roommate, and help build their appreciation of Chinese cultural diversity, stimulate ethnic tourism, and promote invented cultural activities.

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