EMOTIONAL ENCOUNTERS OF CHINESE TOURISTS TO JAPAN

ABSTRACT: While Sino-Japanese relation(s) have been placed on hold since 2013, Japan has become the most desired overseas destination for mainland Chinese tourists. This study aims to understand the unexpected tourist flows of Chinese tourists to Japan seen through the lens of tourist emotions. Using a qualitative approach and netnography data, the study reveals that during their trip, Chinese tourists experience mixed feelings of resistance, admiration, welcome, embarrassment, and attachment to Japan and its people. The trip has challenged Chinese tourists' stereotypes about Japan and has stimulated their reflections on China's modernization.

KEYWORDS. Sino-Japanese political conflict, emotion, netnography

INTRODUCTION

The Japanese invasion of China from 1937 to 1945 has left bitter memories in the minds of Chinese people and has shaped their deep antagonism toward the Japanese (Che, Du, Lu, & Tao, 2015; Zhai, 2015; Zhang, 2015). During the post- war period, the controversial practices of Japanese officials have continuously affected the feelings of Chinese people and have sustained, if not exacerbated, their negative attitudes toward their captors. Nevertheless, the number of Chinese outbound tourists to Japan has increased by as much as 56.6% in 2014 compared with 2013, and since then Japan has become the most desired destination for mainland Chinese tourists (Tahara-Stubbs, 2015). The flow of Chinese tourists to Japan is worth studying as such a phenomenon challenges a widely accepted belief that tourism thrives in tranquil conditions (Hall, Timothy, & Duval, 2004). Given the traumatic history and misconceptions between China and Japan, the experiences of Chinese tourists must also be investigated in order to sustain the flow of these tourists to Japan.

Tourist emotions provide a valuable perspective for studying tourist experiences, which is especially pertinent to the sensitive nature of Chinese tourists' travel to Japan. "Emotions" in this study refer to states that are characterized by episodes of intense feelings, which are asso- ciated with a specific stimulus and are expressed in a specific emotion valence (Goossens, 2000). "Emotional encounters" refer to a sum of emotions that are felt at a specific tourism episode. Emotions are crucial to how touring bodies relate to others and places (Buda, d'Hauteserre, & Johnston, 2014). Studying tourist emotions thus provides insights into the bodily and subjective character of tourist experiences (Crouch & Desforges, 2003). Tucker (2009, p. 44) said that "If we are to understand tourism encounters more fully, it is necessary to examine closely their emotional and bodily dimensions" because they are especially effective in disclosing the nuanced, multi-dimensional, and sensitive aspects of tourist experiences (Robinson, 2012).

This study aims to understand the emotional experiences of Chinese tourists when traveling to Japan. The following research questions are pro- posed: (1) What types of emotion do Chinese tourists feel before, during, and at the end of their trip to Japan?; and (2) What are the driving forces behind such emotions? In the Sino- Japanese tourism context, this study provides different opinions on the effects of political conflicts on tourism flow (Hall et al., 2004; Lepp & Gibson, 2008) as well as contributing to the currently under-researched topic of tourist emotions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotion and Tourism Encounters

Tourist encounters can be framed into pre-, during- and post-stages (Wijaya, King, Nguyen, & Morrison, 2013), in which tourist emotions are embedded in and can influence each stage of tourist encounters. At the pre-trip stage, Goossens (2000) finds that tourists undergo an "information processing mode" while evaluating the attributes of a destination. This mode enables tourists to encode a new stimulus as something similar in their memory, in which an affect is already attached, and then tourists can automatically transfer this affect to the destination itself. If the affect adheres to the hedonic consumption needs of the tourists, they are motivated to take the trip. In contrast, if the affect is associated with risk and uncertainty, tourists may refuse to travel (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005).

Several studies suggest that political instability can deter tourism development between the involved nations, which results from the intervening tourist emotions (see for example Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005). Ongoing political unrest, which may be related to past wars, revives unpleasant memories in the minds of potential travelers, who will then avoid visiting those regions where such conflicts have occurred. Tourists may perceive that visiting a politically conflicted destination may expose themselves to hostile actions similar to those that occurred in the past. Previous wars and ongoing political instability increase the perceived risks, which can be extended to a general feeling of anxiety at the destination (Kim & Prideaux, 2003).

Tourists can also develop emotions toward a place during their trip, which can be reflected in the concepts of place attachment, place identity, and place dependence. Instead of focusing on the symbolic meanings of tourist places, a number of tourist emotion valences are identified. Hosany and Gilbert (2010) affirm that tourists could feel joy, love, positive surprise, and satisfaction at a tourist destination. Alternatively, Robinson (2012) suggests that a general state of tourists should include feelings of anxiety, nervousness, uneasiness, and apprehension because they should cope with various bodily and mental stresses when encountering differences. Some tourist destinations are typically charged with emotions. Tucker (2009) studied the nuanced feeling of dis- comfort and shame that tourists felt in a post- colonial place in Turkey, whereas Gupta (2012) reported that the silence of a post-colonial place in Mozambique could obscure the love for the colonial past.

Despite the differences in the felt emotions of tourists and the arguable influence of emotions on travel decision-making, emotions disclose "hyper-complex and slippery variables relating to

environment, culture, language, learning and memory" (Robinson, 2012, p. 41). If researchers aim to understand tourism encounters more fully, they must closely examine the emotional and bodily dimensions of such encounters (Tucker, 2009).

Chinese Emotions About Japan and Japanese People

The Japanese invasion of China between 1937 and 1945 has left anti-Japanese sentiments in the psyche of Chinese people (see for example Che et al., 2015). The volatile post-war Sino-Japanese political relations have further exacerbated the negative feelings of the Chinese toward the Japanese (Dreyer, 2001; Whiting, 1989). Among the factors that exacerbate such emotions are the refusal of the Japanese to acknowledge its war- time past, Japan's relationship with Taiwan, the sovereignty dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku island, and the increased military budget and desire of Japan to participate in the United States (US)-backed Theater Missile Defense System (Dreyer, 2001; Roy, 2004; Zhai, 2015).

Japanese political officials have also frequently visited the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, which serves as a memorial for all fallen Japanese soldiers and 14 Class-A war criminals who have been executed after the Tokyo War Crimes Trials. Given that this shrine also serves as a reminder of the militarism during the 1920s and 1930s, such visits to the shrine have aroused the concern of the Chinese with regard to the resurgence of Japanese militarism (Dreyer, 2001) and has unleashed nationalistic reminiscences among the Chinese. In particular, the third and the fourth generations of Chinese leadership have permitted public expression of their anti-Japanese sentiments, which has further incited Chinese nationalism, thus affecting the Chinese government's approach toward Japan (Kang, 2013). Contemporary Chinese factors, such as its recent economic rise and the leadership style of Chairman Xi Jinping, are also intertwined with the historical memory of the Chinese to further weaken Sino-Japanese relations in the pre- ceding two years (Zhang, 2015).

Furthermore, China demands freer access to Japan's domestic consumer market, but most Japanese are leery of such economic penetration and see China's economic development as a threat to Japan's prosperity (Takeuchi, 2014). Japan has also publically complained to the Chinese that the Chinese government does not publicize the amount of financial aid (i.e. Official Development Assistance) it has received from Japan since 1979 but constantly reminds the Chinese public about

Japan's misdeeds during World War II (Roy, 2004). At the business level, Che et al. (2015) studied the lasting effects of Sino-Japanese conflicts on contemporary trade and investment between the two countries. They noted that Chinese regions that suffered more severe damages during the Japanese invasion are less likely to trade with Japan. Likewise, Japanese multinationals are less likely to invest in Chinese regions that suffered greater numbers of causalities during the Japanese invasion. At the consumer level, various provoking events associated with Sino-Japanese relations from 2004 to 2012 have significantly hampered the sales of the six major brands of Japanese vehicles, with effects lasting for up to three months every time (Yang & Tang, 2014). Yet, Sino-Japanese cooperative projects involving common interests have continued to thrive (Takeuchi, 2014), particularly in the fields of environment, health, and trade (Dreyer, 2001).

The perceptions of the Chinese toward Japan may also be affected by the penetration of Japanese popular culture in China, including Japanese music, television dramas, comics, and animation. Cultural industries can wield "soft power" to influence an array of audiences. After examining the influence of Japanese popular culture in Asia, Otmazgin (2008) argues that the majority of the participants are fascinated by the sophistication, creativity, esthetic design, and quality of such culture. The other sociocultural aspects of Japan are also extended to Japanese customs, sports, and fashion. Unlike American popular culture, popular products from Japan are considered non-nationalistic and non-dogmatic products that reflect Japan's positive and friendly image (Otmazgin, 2008). In summary, as the traumatic history, ideology disparity, and political rivalries may have tightened the Sino-Japanese relations, the perceptions of the Chinese toward Japan may be amplified by Japanese popular culture and the positive cooperation between the Japanese and Chinese.

Booming Japanese Tourism Market in China

Despite tightened Sino-Japanese relations since 2013, Japan has emerged as the most desired travel destination for Chinese tourists (Wei, 2015). The number of mainland Chinese tourist arrivals in Japan has reached 2.4 million in 2014, which is double the volume of tourist arrivals in 2013. The average spending of Chinese tourists has increased by 10.4% to JPY 231,753 (US$1,935), making them the highest spenders in Japan (Tahara-Stubbs, 2015). The growth of the Chinese tourism

market has been so significant that the Abe government has acknowledged the potential for the Chinese tourism market to recover the economy of Japan (Tahara-Stubbs, 2015).

External factors also contribute to the increased popularity of Japan with mainland Chinese tourists. After the yen fell against the US-dollar by 22% in 2014 (Wei, 2015), Japan has become an affordable destination and a new shopping paradise for Chinese tourists. In response, the Japanese government has introduced additional products in its tax-exemption scheme to stimulate the tourists' shopping potential. The multiple entry visa requirements in Japan are also relaxed by lowering the required salary from CNY 250,000 to CNY 100,000 (He, 2015).

METHOD

To date, the vast amount of online social interactions has entirely changed the practice of ethnography and all of the social sciences. "Netnography" is regarded as a methodological innovation used to investigate the consumption behaviors of different cultures and communities on the Internet and as an "archive of life and window into hidden worlds" (Kozinets, 2015, p. 92). Such a concept has become popular in tourism studies, particularly in tourist experience research (Mkono & Markwell, 2014). Netnography is applied in the current research because of its politically sensitive nature. This method can help researchers perform covert, passive observations (Elliott, Shankar, Langer, & Beckman, 2005).

We followed the three steps of netnographic analysis as suggested by Mkono and Markwell (2014). The online travel blog Mafengwo was used for the data collection because it is the leading travel user generated content (UGC) website in China, with more than 40 million registered users and over one million active users who frequently participate in discussions and share opinions on various topics (Analysys, 2014). According to a report by Analysys (2014), the majority of users are in colleges and are relatively well-educated; half of the users are aged below 29 years, and 30% of them are aged between 30 years and 50 years, which indicates an approximation to the profile of tourists visiting Japan (World Tourism Cities Federation, 2014).

Given the popularity of tourism and the political conflicts of China with Japan over the preceding two years, we selected blogs that were posted from January 2012 to December 2014 on Mafengwo. Thereafter, to identify the most representative blogs, we turned our attention to those blogs with the most follow-up comments and reviews because of their indication of sufficient and varied

social interactions (Kozinets, 2015). Then the researchers scanned these blogs to ensure that each meets the seven criteria, namely relevancy, activity, interactivity, substantiality, heterogeneity, richness in descriptive data, and ability to offer a particular experience (Kozinets, 2015). After deleting those that could not meet the criteria, 20 blogs were retained, which included 507,561 words (including blogs and follow-up comments) and 6252 photos. After analyzing 15 blogs, the researchers reached the point of information saturation so that no new information was generated from the data. The remaining five blogs were used to verify the representativeness of the generated categories.

NVivo 10 was used for the data analysis. The rigorous coding techniques of Corbin and Strauss (1990) were applied for analyzing qualitative data, namely line-by-line opening, axial, and selective coding. The hypothetical relation- ships proposed during axial coding were verified against five additional blogs before the selective codes were named. The criteria for naming a selective code included the following: (1) a category's centrality in relation to other categories; (2) the occurrence frequency of a category in the data; (3) the inclusiveness and relation of one category to other categories; (4) the implications of a category for a more general theory; (5) the movement of a category toward the theoretical power; and (6) the category's allowance for maximum variation in terms of dimensions, properties, conditions, consequences, and strategies (Strauss, 1987).

In order to ensure interpretative reliability, two researchers performed data analysis, with each of them analyzing the data thrice over a long period of engagement; their interpretations were further triangulated with newspaper articles on Chinese tourist behavior in Japan and other literature on Sino-Japanese relations to ensure validity (Maxwell, 1992). The research findings were further evaluated using Corbin and Strauss's (1990) seven evaluation criteria, including evaluating the sampling strategy, explanatory power, and appropriateness of each emerged category.

RESULTS

Identified emotions are listed in Table 1. These emotions demonstrate certain patterns in each tourist travel phase. Tourists tend to experience a combination of fear, anxiety and wonder before the trip; meanwhile, however, they also experience positive emotions, such as admiration, embarrassment, anxiety, and hedonism, during the trip. At the end of the trip, tourists tend to reminisce and reflect on their overall travel experience. Given that some emotions overlap

throughout the trip, the findings are organized around the discrete emotions rather than the course of the trip. The emotions in Table 1 are reorganized into four themes, which will be explained in the following subsections.

Feelings of Resistance

The selected blogs implied a stream of resistant feelings from the Chinese tourists. Negative memories and emotions, including "Anti- Japanese war" and "Diaoyu Island dispute", often surfaced during the travel decision-making stage. A few Chinese tourists described their travel decision as "torture" and were concerned that their friends would regard them as "traitors". Therefore, "writing travel blogs about Japan will be disdained". The past atrocities of the Japanese have also affected the perceptions of Chinese tourists of the potential safety and difficulties they may experience in Japan, which have driven these tourists to join package tours. The aroused anxiety suggests that historical hostility has negatively influenced the decisions of Chinese tourists to travel to Japan.

This painful decision-making process was endured until the tourists realized that political relations "are a matter between nations that we cannot reach", and that "a travel destination is safe unless the government announces other- wise". Therefore, "personal travel decisions should not be influenced by politics". This thought challenges the common belief that tour- ism can only thrive in tranquil conditions (Hall et al., 2004). In fact, tourists can categorize the risk elements into immediate and remote ones, and are only concerned about the immediate risks when making travel decisions. If threats are considered remote, tourists are not affected nor expect they to find a solution to the threats at the earliest opportunity (Foucault, 1982).

Controversial tourist attractions may also revive collective memories about the past. After passing by the former Osaka Museum in Osaka Castle Park, which previously served as the military headquarters of Japan during their invasion of China, one tourist claimed:

> *I am not sure how the Japanese would intro- duce this museum to their next generations. (They should) tell them about the atrocities that their ancestors have committed!!*

The above statement reflects the distrust of the Chinese tourist toward the Japanese education system because of how historical facts are distorted in the history textbooks in Japan (Dreyer, 2001; Whiting, 1989). Her attitude also typified the inclination of the Chinese to reminisce about their past. As indicated by the ritualistic incantation, "Past experience, if not forgotten, is a guide for

the future". Chinese education and media have taught the youth about the past to prevent the repetition of such events in the future and encouraged the nation to feel pride in China's victory over Japan. The superiority of China over Japan has also been indicated in the blogs that have disdainfully described the Japanese as "small". One tourist compared the grand sceneries in Jiu Zhai Gou with those in Oshino Hakkai, its Japanese equivalent, by saying that:

Oshino Hakkai is said to be equivalent to Jiu Zhai Gou in Sichuan. But after my visit they are absolutely incomparable! This place was just a very small corner of Jiu Zhai Gou, though the view was not bad.

TABLE 1. Tourist Emotions and Travel Process

Travel phase	Emotion	Definition
Pre-trip	Hedonic	The pursuit of pleasure or sensual self-indulgence.
	Fear	Dread of an impending disaster and an intense urge to defend oneself primarily by getting out of the situation (Öhman & Mineka, 2001).
	Anxiety	Apprehensive anticipation of future danger or misfortune, accompanied by a feeling of dysphoria or symptoms of tension (Lewis, 2008).
	Wonder	The state of mind that signals the limits of our present understanding have been reached, and that our outlook may be different from the current understanding. It can generate interest in doing something (Opdal, 2001).
During-trip	Admiration	A feeling of pleasure, approval, and respect.
	Embarrassment	Results from one's evaluation of his/her actions in relation to the prevailing standards, rules, and goals in evaluating oneself (Lewis, 2008).
	Pride	Pride is the consequence of a successful evaluation of a specific action. Pride may be experienced through the feeling of joy over a positive action, thought, or feeling (Lewis, 2008).
	Anxiety	As for pre-trip anxiety.
	Surprise	Elicited by unexpected events that deviate from predetermined perceptions (Schützwohl, 1998).
Trip-end	Joy	Experience of freedom, mastery, and social differentiation (Izard, 1992).
	Meditation	A mode of consciousness in realizing some benefits, acknowledging contentment, or learning from a previous experience (Lutz, Slagter, Dunne, & Davidson, 2008).

The tourists also demonstrated resistant yet transient feelings during their travels. Their resistant feelings were supported by little reasoning and lengthy discourses and shifted quickly to a playful, recreational state. One blogger posted a photo showing two guards smiling at each other during a changing ceremony in front of the Emperor's Palace. He playfully commented, "Be serious! You are exchanging guards!" Although such ceremony symbolizes the protection of Japanese militarism to the Chinese, the tourist found amusement in the guards' spontaneous outburst of inappropriate emotions. These encounters show that tourist experiences are imbued with sociopolitical influences, but negative feelings are weakened or replaced by hedonism, which often dominates tourist experiences. To some extent, this finding echoes the argument of Adams (2003), who suggests that tourists visit strife-torn destinations not for political meditation, but for leisure purposes.

Feelings of Admiration

Despite expressing feelings of resistance, the selected blogs also demonstrated an overall positive tone toward Japan. The beautiful scenery, quality of life, and sense of protecting the natural and sociocultural environment in Japan have attracted the praise of these bloggers. At the same time, these bloggers have contrasted their admiration with their criticisms of the pollution and poor social etiquette in China. Typical criticisms include the following:

The environment of Tokyo greatly contrasts with that of Beijing!

Unlike in China, people in Japan are allowed to walk on lawns. The lawns in Japan also remain clean and tidy after they are walked on.

Japanese people have a thrifty spending style – their cars are economic and small.

The water in Japan is clean and even the toilet tap water is drinkable. That is impossible in China.

We should learn from the Japanese to wear seatbelts while driving!

Each house is so beautiful. The air is clean and no litter on the streets.

Chinese tourists also appreciate how the Japanese preserve their culture and tradition. They are amazed by the architectural harmony of the old and new buildings, the mixed ancient and modern attire of Japanese city dwellers, and the popularity of Japanese traditional houses. One tourist described his admiration for several gravel squares in Tokyo by saying that these roads were inherited from ancient times during which assassins were prevalent in the city. To prevent themselves from being murdered, the ancient people intentionally paved the roads with gravel. When the assassins walked on the gravel at night, the peddling noise could alert the sleeping residents to their presence. Based on this anecdote, the tourist lamented that a gravel road could not be found in China because the Chinese usually destroyed historical relics for the sake of modernization.

Chinese tourists also expressed their admiration for Japanese innovation, interestingly in the case of the Japanese practice of treating negative oracles in fortune telling. Fortune telling is a practice of predicting one's future life and a negative prediction can influence Chinese people's emotions. In Tokyo Sensō-ji where this kind of fortune telling is practiced, negative oracles can be left inside the temple. Therefore, the Chinese people will not feel a sense of bad luck. This innovation instils feelings of luck and positivity in the minds of Chinese travelers while traveling in Japan. Chinese tourists also admire the Japanese mind- set regarding advancing technology. After visiting the Time Capsule, a tourist was moved by the intention of the Japanese to maintain the continuity of their technologies by enhancing the communication of their past and future. In addition, they admired how the Japanese make their souvenirs, fully utilize their space, and design their architecture with "delicacy and beauty".

It is not unusual for Chinese tourists to admire the better-than-home natural and socio-cultural environments. However, in the context of Chinese tourists visiting Japan, a change from pre-existing negative emotions about Japan to positive ones was observed based on their actual visit. Rather than fixed and predetermined, tourists are open and reflective of what they see. Hence, the predetermined conflicts of Chinese tourists with Japan and its people are renegotiated and shifted to feelings of admiration. This reflexivity is fostered by confronting the differences in people and things that contradict and challenge one's predetermined and non-reflexive ways of doing things (Edensor, 2001). Tourism offers individuals the opportunity to inquire about the reality and elements of places, bodies, subjectivities, and sensibilities (Pons, 2003). The resulting discourses also acknowledge how ordinary things, such as the sky, cars, and buildings, contribute to the tourist's understanding of places (Pons, 2003).

Feelings of Self-Reflexivity

Rosenberg (1990) argues that emotions are fundamentally shaped and adjusted from a process of reflexivity on social learning and culture appreciation. The reflexivity among humans is rooted in a social process, particularly in the role of the other and of seeing the self from the other's perspective (Cooley, 2009). Feeling welcomed and embarrassed can be classified as emotions that are raised by self-reflexivity. Chinese tourists feel welcomed in Japan by describing the Japanese people as "cute", "polite", "smiling calmly", "cordial", and "gracious" in contrast to the stereotypes of "cunning", "sly", "mean", and "concerned about the money" (Whiting, 1989). One Chinese tourist forgot to take along with her the souvenirs that she bought from a booth, and upon returning to the souvenir shop, the old lady happily said, "It is you!" Another Chinese tourist wrote about her encounter with a Japanese youth:

> *A young Japanese with a smiling face asked me in poor Chinese whether I wanted to take a rickshaw. His eyes widened in a very cute way, saying that "it is super fun!"*

Chinese tourists also described the Japanese people as caring. One of the bloggers wrote:

> *I saw a group of Japanese kindergarten schoolchildren in the park. These kids were wearing hats and looked very cute and well behaved . . . The accompanying teachers were extremely careful and conscientious. Not even for one second did they move their eyes away from the kids. They were always bending over and constantly reminding the kids of something.*

The personal experiences of these tourists have clearly changed their perceptions of the Japanese. In relation to this, one tourist emphasized the role of tourism in correcting misperceptions by writing the following:

> *Before visiting Japan, I thought that all the Japanese people were the same as Abe who disliked China and the Chinese people. However, once you enter the country, you will find that only few Japanese people are right-wingers; the majority of the people are helpful and polite to the Chinese people. They are also longing for a peaceful relationship with China.*

Thus, influenced by the feeling of being welcomed, the Chinese tourists became reflexive about how their behavior was being perceived by the Japanese people. One tourist wanted to take photos

of commodity goods in a Japanese store, but she remembered from the news that Japanese people did not like one taking photos without permission. She shyly asked for the permission of the store owner, and stressed in her blog that the photos were taken with per- mission. She also called on the readers to be considerate about their hosts and act as polite Chinese tourists while in Japan. Reflexive emotions can be triggered by the reflexive self and by the reflexive agency (Cooley, 2009). In the case of the Chinese tourists in Japan, their reflexivity was not built on their pre-determined feelings toward and mis- perceptions of the Japanese; hence, this made them feel that they deserved the hospitality of the Japanese. Instead, these tourists reflected on their personal experience or immediate evaluation of the Japanese people, which in turn encouraged them to reciprocate the courtesy they had received from their hosts.

Feelings of Attachment to Japan

Many tourists delightedly posted pictures of various Japanese animated characters, such as Doraemon, Anpan Man, Pokémon, and Hello Kitty on their blogs, expressing their attachment to the Japanese culture. "Attachment" refers to the psychological bond that links an individual with objects. This bond is formed by the individual's identification with the attitudes, values, or goals of the model, and that individual's acceptance and incorporation of these characteristics into his or her cognitive response set (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). One tourist commented how these Japanese characters immediately stirred his memories; one tourist was amazed to find the elements of Detective Conan at the Yura train station; another tourist spent RMB 700 on transportation to take a picture of a Slam Dunk comic book. Several tourists have also recalled the works of Ikkyū Sōjun (Buddhist Cartoon) after visiting the Kinkakuji Temple. Although the temple can only be admired from a distance, the Chinese tourists seemed to be very familiar with the meanings attached to this place.

Japanese movies have also influenced the experiences of Chinese tourists. A tourist commented that the corridor and the interior of the house in which he was staying were similar to those in a Japanese horror movie that he recently watched, thus depriving him of sleep. The film Memoirs of a Geisha has also raised Chinese tourists' interest in Japanese geishas. Japanese popular culture has created an emotional bond between Chinese tourists and Japan. Japanese popular culture can also shape the perception by the Chinese of the Japanese. Upon talking with a polite Japanese male sales assistant, one of the tourists commented that "He resembled a Japanese comic book character with his face, smile, and cuteness". Another tourist expressed a different opinion about a demanding Japanese old lady whom he described as "not amiable and kind unlike those characters in comic books". This reflects the findings of Lisle (2007), who suggests that the intensified globalization has made every part of the world instantly recognizable, assessable, and understandable. This impact is especially important in the case of conflict-ridden destinations.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Emotions are increasingly important to engage consumers with products/services and influence their purchase intention and brand loyalty. Therefore, tourism marketing must understand the emotional aspects of tourist experiences. In the case of destinations that can stir negative emotions in tourists, the emotional experiences of the tourists in these countries must be investigated to sustain the tourism flow. However, current tourism literature has overlooked these destinations, especially in the Sino-Japanese tourism context, and the emotional aspects of tourist experiences. The current study narrows the research gap by exploring the emotional encounters of Chinese tourists in Japan using netnography data. Figure 1 shows that the emotional encounters of Chinese tourists are complex and can be influenced by historical and present discourses, political influences, and direct personal contacts. However, these influences change dynamically in travel experiences: the further away from the left, the more the influence of history diminishes; with movement toward the middle and right, the influence of culture increases. These factors can produce mixed feelings of anxiety and wonder, welcome and embarrassment, admiration and pride, and hedonism and meditation. These ambivalent feelings reflect the bitter memories of Chinese tourists regarding the Japanese invasion of China, which in turn negatively affect their travel decisions. During their visit in Japan, the negative emotions of these tourists become distant and transient as they begin to admire the natural sceneries, people, and quality of life in Japan. Therefore, we contend that the

Sino- Japanese history and the ongoing political tension between Japan and China have a limited influence on the travel experiences of Chinese tourists in Japan.

The increased openness of the Chinese people triggers their desire to visit Japan. This openness results from the unsatisfactory socio- cultural practices in China, which excessively emphasize modernization and economic bene- fits without considering environmental sustain- ability, sociocultural preservation, and etiquette cultivation. How Chinese authorities disregard the sociocultural values in their country drives the ordinary Chinese citizens to question the credibility of Chinese government policies and Chinese media reports about Japan and other countries. Today, Chinese people are becoming more aware of the inclination of Chinese politicians to obstruct a well-informed view of other countries. They are now better able to separate the past from the present and the government propaganda from the "real" world. Hence, the relationship between China's history and its international relations is considered a problem for Chinese politicians and not for ordinary Chinese citizens.

Therefore, we have to reconsider the com- mon belief regarding political instability and tourism flow (Hall et al., 2004). Our findings support Reisinger and Mavondo (2005), who suggest that political conflicts affect tourists' anxiety to some extent, but do not deter tour- ism. Political risks are too remote to affect individual travel because tourists can study the social reality in their target destinations and become rational and cynical about domestic political propaganda. Furthermore, the factors that lead to political conflicts, such as misconceptions and traumatic history, do not remain static, but may even be diluted by the ongoing sociopolitical progress in the once-victimized nation (Buda et al., 2014). Therefore, the ongoing domestic sociocultural conflicts may obscure tourists' evaluation of the "enemy" nation. Time can also slowly and naturally wash off the previous hatred to give way to a new and positive perception of another country. This study contributes to the literature on tourist emotions. Consistent with other studies that identify pleasure, hedonism, fun, and surprise as tourist emotions (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010), this study also identifies fear, anxiety, admiration, welcome, and embarrassment as tourist experiences. Furthermore, tourists are not passive observers and can experience various ranges of emotions in a conflict-ridden destination. This concept contradicts the idea of "morbid or ghoulish" (Sharpley, 2005) or entirely passive emotional encounters (Lisle, 2007), which are typically encountered when traveling in such destination. Thus, the experiences of tourists in these destinations are not only

limited to commemorating the past, but may involve the experience of a mix of fear, conflict, and fun.

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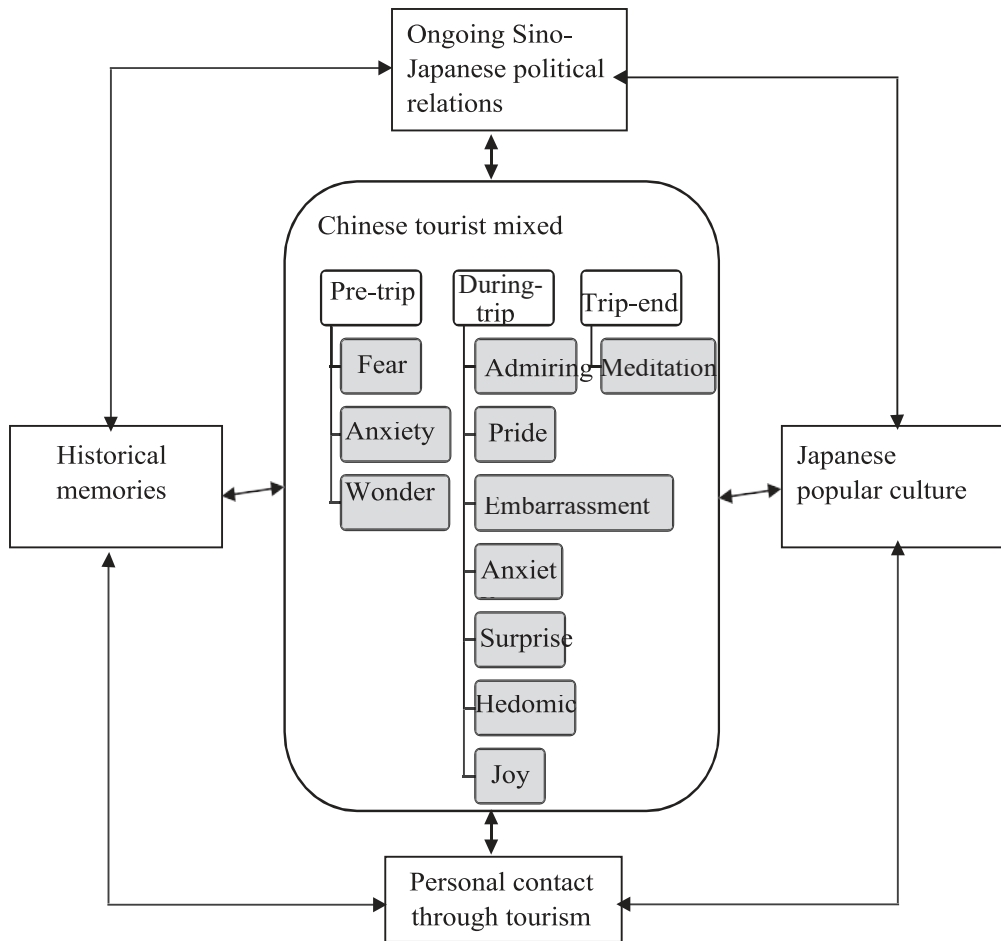
FIGURE 1. Mixed Emotional Encounters of Chinese Tourists

Our findings have updated Whiting's (1989) predictions that the Chinese would not show positive feelings for Japan and the Japanese, although they would have a grudging admiration for the economic growth and technological modernization of Japan. However, we find that through tourism, the Chinese people's admiration for Japan can reduce the history and political propaganda-driven misconceptions of these people toward the Japanese (see for example D'Amore, 1988; Jafari, 1989). By directly interacting with the local Japanese people, Chinese tourists are now beginning to perceive Japan as an economically powerful and techno- logically advanced country; but also in the process, they learn the "real" side of Japanese society and appreciate the friendliness of the Japanese people. Chinese tourists have thus formulated a new image of Japan through their travels and adoption of the Japanese popular culture.

Given that traveling to Japan has promoted "low political activities", the previous arguments may give insights into the future of Sino-Japanese relations (Qiu, Li, Huang, & Dang, 2015; Yu, 1997). Though Yu (1997) suggests that the influence of low political actives should eventually influence high political activities, we tend to accept the interpretation of Kim and Prideaux (2003, p. 684), who suggest that "travel and admiration of each other's cultures did not prevent war because the strength of personal sentiments was outweighed by political considerations". Tourism does not address ideological and economic issues, but represents one of the many elements that can contribute to the normalization of political relations.

From a practical perspective, given that many Chinese tourists experience difficulties at the decision-making stage, tourism marketers should draw attention to this stage to reduce or prevent hesitation among potential Chinese travelers. The Japan National Tourism Organization may consider using social media to encourage past travelers to promote their positive experiences in Japan. Elements of Japanese popular culture can also be used at this stage to weaken the hostile feelings of the Chinese toward the Japanese. Lastly, opportunities of personal interaction with the Japanese people should be designed to enhance a positive experience for Chinese tourists.

This study has several limitations. The texts in the selected travel blogs are phrased simply, which prevents these blogs disclosing nuanced feelings (Mkono & Markwell, 2014). Therefore, future studies must supplement netnography with other techniques, such as surveys, to explore other gradations in emotion. Blogger's demographic information is also not available, hence the researchers cannot really relate the tourist emotional experiences to these factors.

In addition, given that the culture of the researchers can influence their interpretations of felt emotions, the readers must be careful in applying the findings of this study to other contexts. Despite these limitations, this study has embraced the call for understanding tourists as "persons" and has shown interest in how these tourists encounter, receive, and react to the affective change in their encounters.

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