

WINTER TOURISM EXPERIENCES AND CHINESE VISITORS TO
THE YUKON TERRITORY, CANADA:
IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

by
Xinhui Zhang



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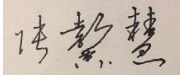
Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management
Department of Recreation and Tourism Management at
Vancouver Island University

November 2019

DECLARATION

This thesis is a product of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration.

I agree that this thesis may be available for reference and photocopying at the discretion of Vancouver Island University.

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Xinhui Zhang

THESIS EXAMINATION COMMITTEE SIGNATURE PAGE

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Department of Recreation and Tourism Management for acceptance, the thesis titled *Winter tourism experiences and Chinese visitors to the Yukon Territory, Canada: Implications for sustainable tourism development* submitted by Xinhui Zhang in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management.



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ABSTRACT

Winter tourism in the polar and sub-polar regions is flourishing with challenges and opportunities. A culture change involving development of Arctic winter tourism has also been noticed. Yukon Territory is one of the most visited regions in the Canadian Arctic with a relatively fragile environment. Chinese tourists, as an emerging tourism market, have become one of the main target groups of Yukon Territory and in Canada, and understanding the tourism experience is important for future tourism development, which can be achieved by maximally meeting experiential needs and minimizing negative impacts on the sustainable use of tourism resources. The purpose of this research is to understand the experiential features of winter tourism promoted to Chinese visitors and to identify the relationship of experiential features to sustainable tourism development in an Arctic context. A qualitative approach and two methods were used to collect data for content analysis: 1) field notes, using a reflective journal that documented the researcher's own experience as a participant in the 2018 Yukon Winter Tourism Field School; and, 2) tourism website content analysis, focusing on sixteen Yukon tourism websites selected by the information matrix. Based on the tourism experience conceptual model (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010), an experiential feature matrix was used to allocate relevant information, filter the effective information and analyze visitors' experience. Then, a sustainable tourism framework, focusing on economic, social-cultural and environmental aspects, was developed through a review of the literature related to sustainable tourism development principles and strategies in the Arctic. Finally, the findings related to the extraordinary experiential features were conceptualized as consisting of three themes that included 'nature', 'unique' and 'people-oriented'. The analysis provided insight into how winter tourism experiences aimed at Chinese visitors benefit sustainable tourism beyond economic considerations and how development of winter tourism in the north that extends its benefits to environmental and cultural sustainability, issues that relate to community participation, tourism services and the market segment should be addressed.

KEYWORDS: winter tourism, Chinese visitors, sustainable tourism, Arctic, Yukon Territory

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADS	Approved Destination Status
AEPS	Arctic Environment Protection Strategy
AHDR	Arctic Human Development Report
AOA	Arctic Outback Adventures
AOS	Arctic Observation Systems
ASI	Arctic Social Indicators
ASTD	Arctic sustainable tourism development
Cantrip	Cantrip Canada Company Ltd.
CCYT	Canada-China Year of Tourism
CITS-Dalian Branch	China International Travel Service Dalian Branch
CTA	China Tourism Academy
CTC	Canadian Tourism Commission
DMOs	Destination Management Organizations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
GSTC-D	Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations
QOL	Quality of life
SMART	Sustainable model for Arctic regional tourism
TBL	Triple Bottom Line
TIAC	Tourism Industry Association of Canada
TIAY	Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon
TTIT	Top Top International Tour
UFA	Umbrella Final Agreement
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WTAY	Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon
WTTC	World travel and tourism council
WTO	World Tourism Organization (also “UNTWO”)
YESAA	Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act
YG	Yukon Government
318 Arctic Colour	318 Arctic Colour Tourism Development Company

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The international travel and tourism industry is one of the world's largest service industries, providing jobs and supporting the livelihoods of millions (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO/WTO], 2017). As an economic activity, tourism is an important element in the global development of social and economic systems (Saarinen, 2004) and continues to generate over ten percent of the GDP and jobs across the world economy (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2017). Additionally, tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries (UNWTO, n.d.). Tourism generates a strong economic flow into other sectors, such as retail, transportation, manufacturing and construction (WTTC, 2017). Thus, many countries view the expansion of tourism-related services as a means to achieving further economic development. Through the implementation of a socio-economic development plan, tourism in Canada has been a major contributor to the economy. Canada's tourism industry is a 90-billion-dollar sector, equivalent to more than two percent of Canada's GDP and fostering over 1.7 million jobs across the country, and one in eleven Canadian jobs depends on the tourism economy (Government of Canada, 2017). According to the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) (2018a), the Canadian tourism industry represents more of Canada's GDP than agriculture, forestry and fisheries combined. Therefore, developing the tourism industry, in regions rich in tourism resources, can effectively boost local economies.

Historically, visitors entering Canada mostly came from the United States and Europe (Statistics Canada, 2017). Canada is emerging as a popular tourist destination in Asia (Asingh, 2017). Figure 1 describes changes to the number of tourists from Asia and the rapid growth since the late 1980s (Statistics Canada, 2017). China has been Canada's fastest growing tourism market and is Canada's leading source of tourists (Statistics Canada, 2017). Over 494,000 Chinese people travelled to Canada in 2015, a threefold increase from 2008 (Asingh, 2017). 2016 saw the arrival of 610,139 Chinese tourists, an increase of twenty-four percent from 2015 (Tourism Marketing Agency, 2017). Currently, China is Canada's second largest contributor of

tourism dollars to the Canadian economy, with 600,000 tourists in 2016 and 2017 combined (Destination Canada, 2018).

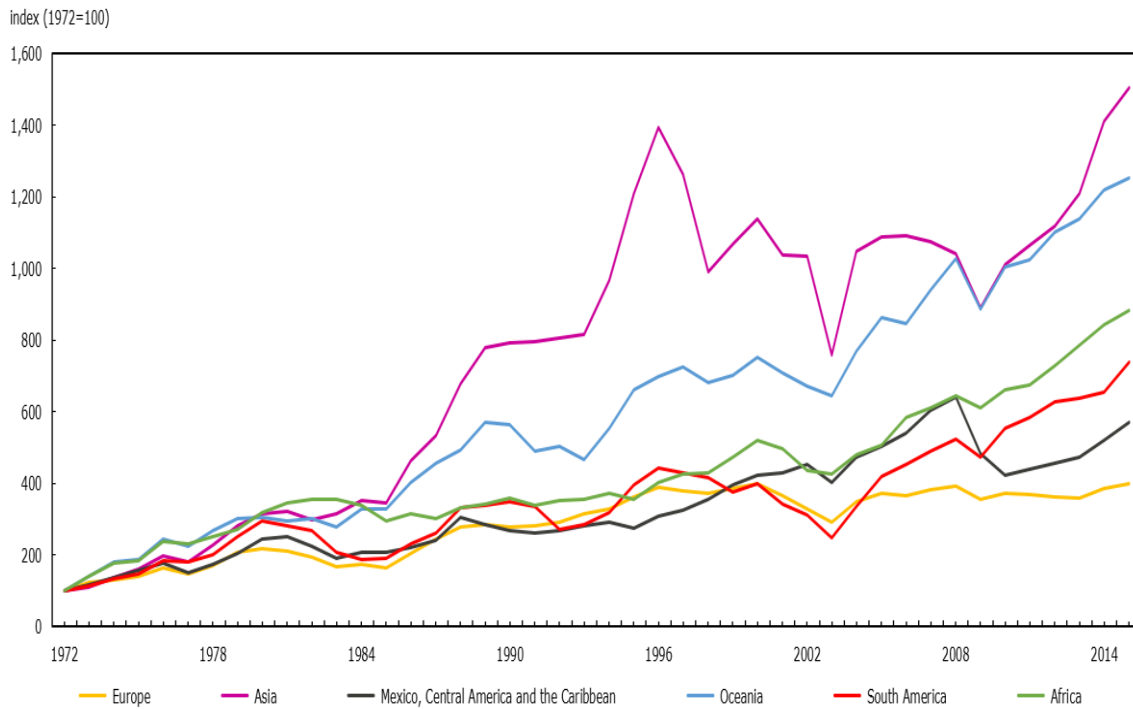


Figure 1. Growth in overseas travellers visiting Canada, by region, 1972 to 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2017).

There are many factors at play in the development of this unique tourism relationship between Canada and China. First, Canadian Chinese tourism benefits from the success of China’s economic reform. The creation of the open-door policy in 1979 introduced globalization to China, modernized the country’s economy and boosted the growth in GDP (Jin, 2014). With a population of 1.3 billion, China is the second largest economy globally and its GDP growth has averaged nearly 9.3 percent per year (The World Bank, 2018; Zhang & Shen, 2018). It is anticipated that, under this supportive economic landscape, the tourism market for Chinese overseas travel will remain vigorous in the coming years and will continue to grow (China Daily, 2010). A second factor is that, after the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, a rapid rise in tourism occurred for the five-year period (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017).

In response to this market trend, Canada has begun its collaboration with China in these years (Lasserre, 2010). In 2010, Canada was granted Approved Destination Status (ADS) (Canadian Tourism Commission [CTC], 2013; Government of Canada, 2009a). The bilateral governments agreed to make 2018 the Canada-China Year of Tourism (CCYT), demonstrating the bright future for further cooperation between China and Canada (Government of Canada, 2018).

As for sustainability, economic benefits always come with a social, cultural and environmental price tag. When economic development is strongly valued, the tourism market is prioritized over risks to natural resources and socio-cultural impacts. Moreover, the Canadian government's action plan, called "A Strategic Plan for the Chinese Market", aims to double the number of tourists to Canada from China by 2021 (Government of Canada, 2017). Destination Canada (2016), a data-driven crown corporation owned by the Government of Canada with the goal to stimulate international demand and tourism export revenue, states that the number of Chinese tourists is significant and will continue to increase exponentially. Therefore, the increase in Chinese visitation to Canada may negatively impact the sustainable development of tourism if there is no critical assessment accompanying the invitation to visit Canada's north in the winter.

1.1 Canada's Yukon Territory

Canada is a northern nation with a polar region (Government of Canada, 2009b). The Yukon territory is 483,450 square kilometers (185,000 square miles), covers 4.8% of Canada's total land mass, is situated in the north-western corner of Canada (Tourism Yukon, 2017a) and borders Alaska to the west, the Northwest Territories to the east, the Beaufort Sea to the north and British Columbia to the south (Tourism Yukon, 2017b) (see Figure 2). Approximately, one-tenth of Yukon is located in the Arctic Circle and the territory is widely characterized by its severe cold climate and its low population density. It is home to about 40,000 people and 29,758 of that population (or 75%) live in or around Whitehorse, the territory's capital (Tourism Yukon, 2018).

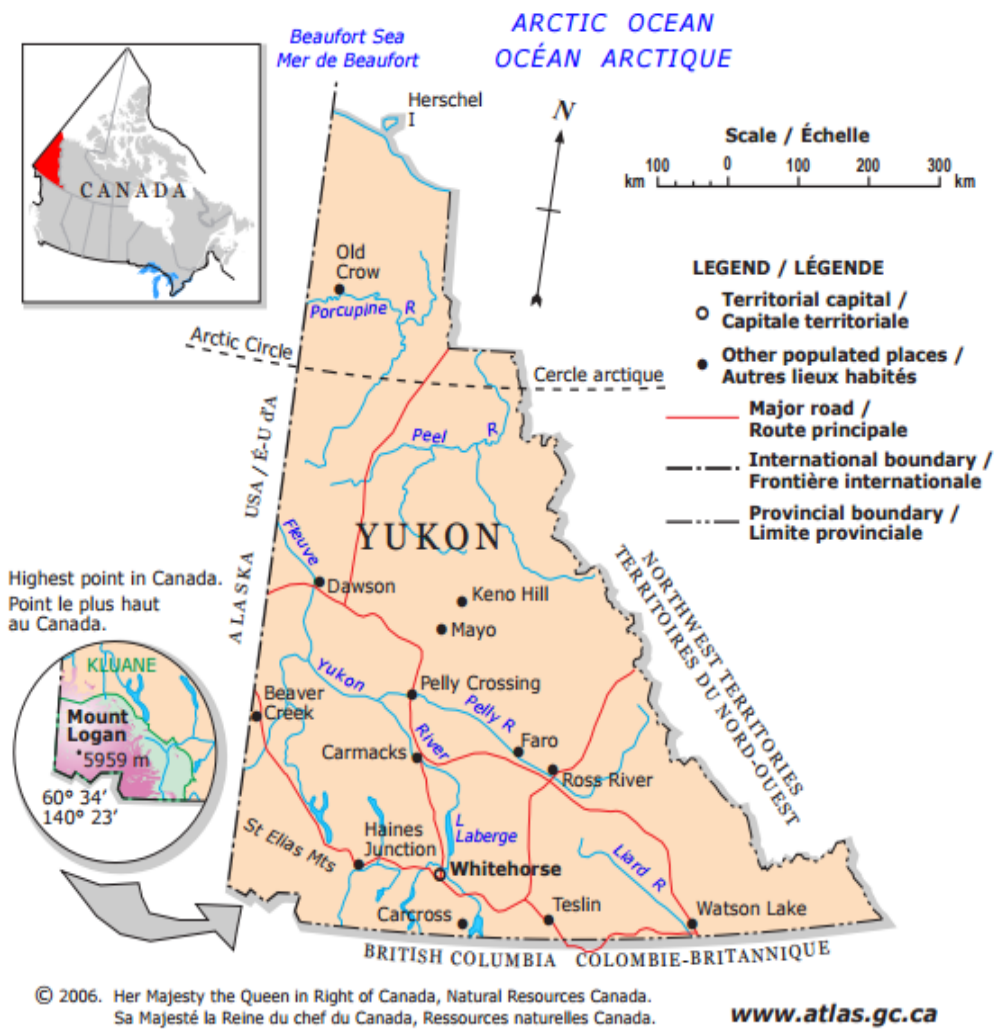


Figure 2. Map of Yukon.

Historically, the Yukon was explored as a fur trading outpost of the Northwest Territories, along with the earliest Euro-Canadian fur trade activities in the last 1700's. In 1897, gold was discovered in the Klondike River. Since then, thousands of gold seekers have flooded into Yukon from all over the world. While the fur trade is under pressure in the current animal-rights climate, it is still noteworthy today and the value of fur production is accounted for in Yukon's annual

statistical review (Yukon Government [YG], 2018, p.55). In 2017, the fur trade got the largest buying attendance due to the buyers from China (Fur Harvesters Auction Inc., 2017).

Yukon is home to 14 First Nations, defined by eight language groups, and make up 21% of the total Yukon population. Since the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) has been signed in 1993, Self-governing First Nations have been cooperating with the federal government in administering governmental affairs according to Yukon land claims and self-government agreements (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2008). Self-governing First Nations have been overseeing and protecting their people living on their land and have always supported and contributed to sustainable tourism development in Yukon in ways, such as moving ahead on implementing the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act (YESAA) (Justice Laws Website, 2003) and releasing the Yukon sustainable tourism development draft strategy for public comments (Government of Yukon, 2018).

In general, tourism is a major contributor to Yukon's economy and is responsible for between 3.9% and 7.2% of the local GDP each year (Engage Yukon, n.d.). Tourism constitutes an integrated and sustainable development approach to economic and community development. However, tourism development is not without its own potentially negative impacts (Engage Yukon, n.d.; McCool & Moisey, 2001). The negative impacts to Yukon include undesirable environmental, cultural, social and economic factors, which are especially relevant for vulnerable regions and the people who live there (Engage Yukon, n.d., p.5). The goal for Yukon is to develop the local tourism industry sustainably by integrating local tourism resources to construct Yukon as a diverse tourism destination and a sustainable region. A wide variety of tourism experiences have been attempted to cater to different tastes, like wildlife tourism, volunteer tourism, health tourism, educational tourism and culinary tourism (Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon [TIAY], 2018, p.10). A diverse and varied approach to tourism development can transform the existing tourism and resource relationships in the business sector, as it connects different businesses, suppliers and consumers and creates sustainable tourism models.

1.2 Introduction to the Research Project

China represents an emerging market for Yukon, especially winter tourism. Developing the Chinese tourism market sector can bring considerable economic benefits to Yukon's tourism destinations. However, there are not many studies in the literature on sustainable tourism in Yukon from Chinese visitors' point of view. In response to tourism's potential, and in consideration of both its development constraints and the challenges of sustainability, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) competing for Chinese travellers and the authorities in Yukon Territory should strategically understand their experiential features marketed to Chinese visitors. Through assessing the relationship of those experiences in view of sustainability, insight into sustainable tourism for the polar region would be gained since the large Chinese market has contributed greatly to the winter tourism industry in northern regions. It is believed that the Chinese market will drive the sustainable tourism industry in the future. This subject was chosen partly because I am interested in northern winter tourism and the Chinese market and because I am familiar with tourism in Yukon, as I have studied and travelled there.

In this study, I use the term *visitor* instead of *tourist*. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), visitors are those who pay a visit to a specific place or event and tourists are visitors who spend at least one night in the country visited. Below is the WTO (2008) definition of visitor:

A visitor is a traveler taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited. A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor) if his/her trip includes an overnight stay, or as a same-day visitor (or excursionist) otherwise (p. 4).

The focus of the study is related to a certain place (Yukon) in winter, thus, using the term, visitor, is an appropriate choice for this study.

This research aims to understand the experiential features that are designed and marketed to Chinese winter visitors to Yukon and the relationship these experiences have to sustainable tourism development. To this end, the research questions are: 1) *what are the experiential features of winter tourism and how are they promoted to Yukon's Chinese visitor market?* and, 2) *what is the relationship between the experiential features promoted to Chinese winter tourism visitors to Yukon and sustainable tourism development?*

Important concepts in this study were “Chinese visitor,” “winter tourism,” “tourism experience,” and “sustainable development.” The experiential features were influenced by Chinese socio-cultural understandings and conceptualizations of winter. A qualitative approach was adopted to gain insight into the relationship between the experiential features of winter and Yukon communities and cultural backgrounds. The content analysis illustrates insights that resulted from answering the first question and are required for addressing the second question. Synthesizing the findings and analyzing the interpretations contributed to reaching the aim of study because the first question identified and framed the experiential features and the second question considered these features within the framework for Arctic sustainable tourism development. Parts of the data were collected from appropriate tourism websites. Also, I participated in the Yukon Winter Tourism Field School (<https://wordpress.viu.ca/yukonfieldschool/>; see also the outline in Appendix A) to experience Yukon winter tourism firsthand. As part of the field school, I also enrolled in the online course, “Yukon First Nation 101”, delivered by the Yukon College (<https://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/programs/courses/yfn-001>), allowing me to develop a broader understanding of Yukon First Nations and self-government. In that way, the relationship of sustainable tourism and the local population or Indigenous culture can be better understood. A tourism experience and a sustainable tourism development framework were developed and used

as the theoretical framework to analyze the data. This investigation provided practical understanding integral to the creation of sustainable tourism development strategies relevant to Yukon. The study was also useful for wider northern polar winter tourism development considerations.

1.3 Organization of the Research

This research is divided into five chapters. Chapter One provides an overview of the research and the context of the study. Chapter Two provides a review and synthesis of the key themes of past research related to this study: 1) polar tourism, 2) winter tourism, 3) the emerging Chinese market, 4) the role of tour guides, 5) tourism experience, and 6) sustainable tourism. Chapter Three describes the methodology, including data collection, trustworthiness and research ethics, as well as the components of the theoretical framework that shaped the analysis, including the tourist experience theoretical framework, illustrated by Cutler & Carmichael (2010), and sustainable tourism development through the Arctic framework. Chapter Four presents the findings. Finally, the discussion and implications of the findings are discussed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Based on the following key themes, this chapter presents a review of six bodies of literature: 1) polar tourism, 2) winter tourism in the Arctic, 3) the emerging Chinese market, 4) the role of tour guides, 5) tourism experience, and 6) sustainable tourism. The first two sections of the literature review present past research on polar and winter tourism, including Yukon's winter tourism. The next section presents the Chinese background and aims to provide the context necessary for addressing the first research question. The next section examines the role of the tour guide, followed by past research on the tourism experience, which is followed by an introduction to conceptualizations of experiential and associated frameworks. Finally, the last section presents sustainable tourism frameworks, including those developed for the Arctic as a specific tourism development context.

2.2 Polar Tourism

There are various definitions of the Arctic and the most common definitions are based on indicators of phytogeography, climate, geomorphology or on latitude; for example, the Arctic is north of the Arctic Circle at 66°33' N or 60°N (Hall & Saarinen, 2010). In evaluating the term polar within a tourism context, biophysical boundaries are most useful in analysing visitation to the polar region. In this study, the research field, Yukon, is crossed by the Arctic Circle and has a subarctic continental climate and sub-arctic tundra landscape. (Yukon Government, 2011).

Many changes have occurred in the polar region. The tourism industry has grown substantially in northern areas during the last few years, and Arctic destinations have become more popular (Vaarala, 2006). According to Snyder (2007a), during the past two centuries, tourism was the only reason for the growth in numbers of visitors in the Arctic region. With the decline of resource of resource extraction industries, such as fishing, minerals or timber, tourism has come to be regarded as an important method of economic development in the Arctic.

Numerous advances in transportation have contributed to the growth of Arctic tourism and expanded the seasonal reach of Arctic tourism (Armstrong, 1991; Van Doren, 1993). Due to its coastal geographic features, much of Arctic tourism growth has come from cruise ship tourism (Arctic Climate Impacts Assessment, 2005). Tourism in the Arctic over the last fifteen years has experienced an unrivalled growth because this region enjoys unique tourism characteristics, such as wildlife, a pristine landscape and local culture (Vaarala, 2006) (see Appendix B).

Since the early 1800s, the Arctic has attracted tourists interested in recreation, mountaineering, hunting and fishing (Conway, 1897; Scidmore, 1896). Recently, European Nordic countries, including Finland, Sweden and Norway, have begun to promote nature-based, wilderness and Sami tourism to attract large numbers of tourists to the Arctic and sub-Arctic areas (Hall, 2009; Müller & Pettersson, 2001). Polar regions are attractive precisely because of their remoteness and wild nature (Medvedev, 2001). There are many marketable concepts in the Arctic, including snow and ice and iconic northern wildlife species, such as polar bears and reindeer (Amoamo & Boyd, 2005; Müller & Pettersson, 2001, 2006; Rosner, 2009). As a tourist destination, polar regions also refer to peripheral attractions and cultural products; for example, the benefit of an increase in the number of visitors to the region can be gained by creating unique images and icons related to place, such as Santa Claus and Father Christmas (Hall, 2008).

Polar tourism is now a mature industry and year-round polar tourism has become a reality (Snyder, 2007b). However, the North is still a relatively fragile environment (Russell, 2008), with the concern that mass tourism might destroy the environment. While the scale of tourism-related environmental damage is presently very small in comparison with the impacts from large industries, such as oil extraction, Colin (1994) claims that, because of the sensitivity of ecosystems, even the smallest change in some Arctic habitats could cause long-term effects. Environmental degradations that result from tourism development is a serious concern, especially in the Arctic (Snyder, 2007b). The waste that tourists produce is also a significant problem in the Arctic. In Yukon, one of the major tourism management concerns is the disposal

of waste (Johnston & Madunic, 1995). On the Norwegian island of Svalbard, situated between continental Norway and the North Pole, tourists use snow scooters to travel around the island, which can have a damaging effect on spring and summer plant growth, particularly where snow cover is thin (Abbot, 1991, p.28). In response to these concerns, the Arctic Environment Protection Strategy (AEPS) was established in 1991. The eight Arctic countries who support AEPS, being Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the USA, have subsequently cooperated on environmental matters and, in 1996, the Arctic council was formed, made up of these eight Arctic nations, in order to monitor sustainable development in the Arctic (Arctic Council, 2018).

2.3 Winter Tourism

2.3.1 Winter tourism in the Arctic region.

Hu and Ritchie (1993) stated that, since 1992, climate and weather have been identified as key drivers for tourists' destination choice. Tourism in cold climate regions is increasingly attracting public, economic and scientific attention. Additionally, the impacts on society and the traditional tourism industry resulting from the development of winter tourism are being identified (Hall & Saarinen, 2010; Hansson & Norberg, 2009). The interest in snow, ice and cold have been explored in marketing strategies (Hansson & Norberg, 2009). Hansson and Norberg (2009) argue that the cold can be defined as harsh, bitter, unsympathetic and dangerous yet, alternatively, as cheerful, energizing, civilized and liberating and as representing an impassioned outlook on life. In marketing strategies, through symbolic and metaphorical uses of cold, the definition of cold is changeable corresponding to different market requirements.

In a circumpolar context, the increasing interest in winter tourism is driving development of the tourism industry and a greater variety of activities. For example, common winter activities in polar areas include northern lights viewing that may involve visiting aurora borealis viewing basecamps, road tours, sea tours, dogsledding, snowmobiling and ice-fishing (Heimtun, 2016). As most activities are directly dependent on the natural environment, it is important to conduct

tourism activities in a sustainable way, for instance, integrating environmental protection protocols and making use of social-cultural resources, and thereby diversifying nature-based tourism services. For example, according to Kaae (2006), local authorities in Greenland diversified their winter tourism development plan by designing activities in the cultural experience sector, such as a tour that introduced early Inuit and Norse culture. The Nordic countries, especially Finland, Norway and Sweden, are good examples of destinations with highly diversified nature-based tourism industries; for example, the Jokkmokk Sami Winter Festival includes various winter activities that integrate Sami culture (Pettersson, 2004).

There are many characteristic tourism experiences that are exclusive to the Arctic (Jaeger & Viken, 2016), the most renowned being to chase the northern lights (Jóhannesson & Lund, 2017; Mathisen, 2017). Indeed, aurora viewing is one of the most famous winter activities all over the world and many people are fascinated by its mysteriousness and splendour. For example, in Japan, there is a myth about the aurora that claims the northern lights bring good fortune and blessedness (Aurora Zone, 2017). The occurrence of an aurora is a highly occasional event which is dependent on many other environmental factors that are beyond human control (Jóhannesson & Lund, 2017). Moreover, the quality of the aurora viewing is determined by the local weather conditions at the time and is another controlling factor. Therefore, there is no guarantee that the aurora borealis will be seen or observed by a specific tour group (Mathisen, 2017). Photographing the northern lights is another challenge (Bertella, 2013). However, these challenges do not necessarily negatively impact the tourist experience as chasing the northern lights and the unpredictability of it can be seen as prized in and of itself (Bertella, 2013).

2.3.2 Winter tourism in Canada.

Winter figures largely in Canada's climate, cultural experience and mythology (Hutchins, 2016). In most of Canada, winter is marked by snow, ice, blizzards and wind. The coldest recorded temperature in North America occurred in Snag, Yukon, on February 3, 1947, when the temperature fell to -63°C (Phillips, 2016). These winter conditions have led to the development

of many adaptations, such as the toboggan, kayak and snowshoes, which facilitated travel in the early days of Canada's history, and have since been incorporated into Canadian leisure activities. Tourism experiences in Canada are characterized by tourism expansion, nature, cold climates and experiences of polar nights. Canada prides itself on being the land of ice and snow and winter does not keep Canadians indoors (Hutchins, 2016). Some of the more popular winter activities include aurora viewing, skiing, snowshoeing, dogsledding, curling, snowmobiling and ice skating. These core tourism products can offer natural scenery for tourists to view (Viken & Granås, 2016). Winter brings various seasonal celebrations, festivals, folklore and winter sports, such as snow and ice sculpting, cross-country ski races and the Yukon Sourdough Rendezvous.

2.3.3 Winter tourism in Yukon Territory.

Yukon is a unique winter tourist destination, offering wilderness, history and cultural attractions that are sought after by a wide range of potential visitors. Yukon has a sub-arctic continental climate with an average frost-free range of 21-93 days (Yukon Government, 2011). At least 75% of the year, Yukon is covered with snow. Winter is the longest season in Yukon, spanning five months, from November to the end of March. The lowest winter temperatures in Yukon can fall as low as -60°C in the winter. Temperatures can drop to -40°C (-40°F) with daily highs of -13°C (8.6°F), making it famous for its winter tourism (Tourism Yukon, 2018). In Yukon territory, according to marketing material generated by tourism agencies' websites, popular activities include northern lights viewing, dogsledding, snowmobiling and hot springs soaking (Arctic Range Adventure, 2017, n.d.; Tundra North Tours, 2016; Yukon wide adventures, 2017). Wilderness enthusiasts are strongly motivated to visit Yukon because of its wilderness, remoteness, nature and wildlife (Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon [WTAY], 2002). Among the various destinations in Canada, Yukon attracts visitors interested in adventure, wildlife and northern lights viewing (Møller, 2011, p. 167). As most of Yukon is wilderness with a unique natural landscape, a code of conduct for Yukon wilderness tourism guides has been

developed and promoted by WTAY (Yukon Wild, 2018) to promote high standards of sustainability of Yukon's unique environment.

A large percentage of the visitor traffic to Yukon is highway travellers who visit Yukon in the summer. Approximately 25% of Yukon is underlaid with permafrost, impacting and limiting transportation and some infrastructures (Government of Yukon Submission, 2015). However, exceptional domestic connections, international airlines and cruise services attract tourists continuously (Government of Yukon Submission, 2015). Yukon is now at a critical point in its development of its tourism market with a sustainable diverse tourism sector seen as vital to a strong and diverse Yukon economy (Yukon Government, 2017).

Tourism development in Yukon requires a strategy focused on attracting target travellers from all over the world. In order to promote Yukon tourism, consumer marketing is an important way to achieve greater efficiency (Yukon Government, 2017). Developing winter tourism can maximize the promotion of Yukon tourism by designing and marketing a quality tourism experience offered by online tour operators.

2.4 Understanding Chinese Visitors

2.4.1 The emerging Chinese overseas tourism market to Canada.

The People's Republic of China, known as mainland China, has a large population of approximately 1.3 billion people. The Chinese name for China is 中国, pronounced "Zhōngguó" in Mandarin, and translates as "the middle kingdom." China can be divided into four regions based on geographical differences (the north, south, northwest and the Qinghai-Tibetan areas) and residents of each region have distinctive lifestyles and customs (Asia for Educators, 2009). Furthermore, Kwek and Lee (2010) pointed out that Chinese tourists are heavily influenced by the Confucius value, harmony, and understanding their behavior and experience should be considered from a Chinese context instead of a Western context (Fu, Cai, & Lehto, 2015). In addition, Chinese tourists' interest in nature is mainly influenced by cultural, religious and philosophical values and beliefs (Packer, Ballantyne, & Hughes, 2014).

International tourism has developed as an industry in China as a result of China's opening economic reform policy. Recent growth in China's outbound travel is mainly attributed to China's political liberalization and economic prosperity. Outbound tourism is defined as all activities organized by legal agencies, in the form of group travel packages, to travel to approved visitor destinations in which Chinese citizens who pay their own expenses. Aldama (2017) reported that in the speech made by Secretary General of the World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO/WTO], the Secretary General said: "Chinese tourists are the most powerful single source of change in the tourism industry" (pp.1). He explains:

Not only is it the biggest domestic market in the world, where 4.4 billion trips are made each year, but it is also the leading global outbound market, with over 135 million international departures in 2016. This number has been increasing in double digits since 2010, and it is merely the tip of the iceberg. The potential of the Chinese market is far greater because only 6 percent of Chinese people own a passport. So, we expect 200 million Chinese to travel abroad in just a few years' time (pp.2-3).

Increasing cooperation between Chinese and Canadian governments boosts travel to Canada. Recently, an agreement was implemented, introducing union pay transactions into the Canadian tourism industry players association, which is one of the most commonly used interbank payment methods in China, in order to simplify international payment issues (TIAC, 2018b). Cooperation of this kind indicates a golden era for developing the market for Chinese tourists to travel to Canada. Moreover, looser monetary policies continue to attract more Chinese travellers to choose overseas travel (Destination Canada, 2016). Relatively low oil prices have impacted many countries; for example, Canada's dollar has been driven to its lowest point (Yukon Government, 2016). In 2016, there were more opportunities for middle-class Chinese to travel and more likely to travel to Canada (Yukon Government, 2016). The number of Chinese outbound travellers choosing to travel to Canada has nearly tripled (CTC, 2013). The CTC 2013

report states that the increase for arrivals in Canada from China from 2002 to 2011 was 150%. As shown in Figure 3, 485,000 Chinese tourists travelled to Canada in 2015 (Destination Canada, 2016).

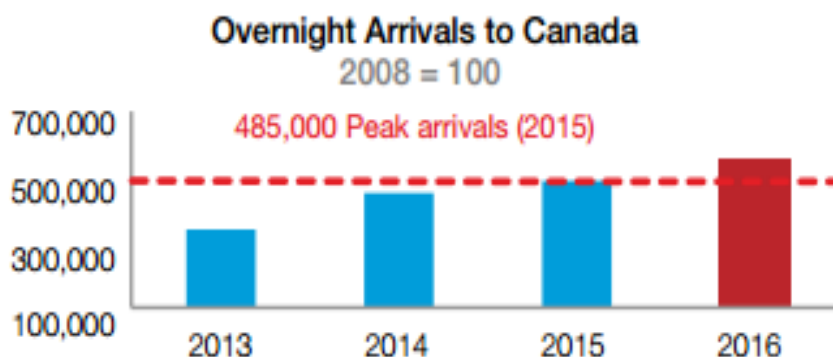


Figure 3. Chinese Overnight arrivals to Canada (Destination Canada, 2016).

In recent years, numerous organizations in Canada and China have collected and published relevant information on winter tourism in Canada (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017). This statistical data has reflected the tourism situation from multiple perspectives: Destination Canada included data related to the number of Chinese visitors over the past few years; the Yukon government presented data related to retail sales revenue, annual overnight visitation and average spending per person per day; and the National Bureau of Statistics of China focused on the annual volume of outbound travellers and predictions for the future. Additionally, national organizations regularly release overseas winter tourism-related information and reports (Du & Dai, 2016; National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017). Studies, conducted by these organizations across China and Canada, reveal that there is a changing attitude, placing more importance on winter tourism in Canada. Specifically, according to TIAC (2015), Global Tourism Watch identifies “nature/scenery” (51%), “history/culture” (19%) and atmosphere (11%) as the three leading attributes that excited potential Chinese visitors to Canada.

Rapid economic growth in China has raised the wealth of its citizens, providing more opportunities to spend on leisure activities to promote quality of life (QOL) (Iwasaki, 2006). TIAC (2015) reported “some 95% of all Chinese travellers, who visit British Columbia and Ontario, are a result of practical (e.g., air access points) and familial reasons among other factors” (p.28). Chinese-Canadians and tourists from mainland China have strong cultural ties, built on mutual economic cooperation and deep family and cultural connections (Luo, 2018). Thus, these motivational factors also play an integral role in tourism development.

2.4.2 Chinese outbound visitors.

Many Chinese visitors to Canada are middle-class and from mainland China, representing the core of the current Chinese overseas tourist group (Pan, 2003). In 2013, one-third of urban citizens were middle class (China Labour Bulletin, 2017) and by 2022, it is expected that seventy-six percent of Chinese urban residents will be upper-middle class (Barton, Chen, & Jin, 2013). The growing middle class is an essential component of China’s “Two Centennial Goals” and the driving force behind the economic growth of overseas travel (Nunlist, 2016). According to China Tourism Academy [CTA] (2016a), Chinese people with tertiary education backgrounds represent the largest portion of the total number of outbound Chinese tourists, approximately 67 percent (p.62).

Today, most Chinese visitors make their travel plans by utilizing relevant information online (Destination Canada, 2018). Nearly 60.5 percent of Chinese tourists prefer to obtain outbound tourism information through the internet (CTA, 2016a, p. 65). The internet has a strong influence with more than 620 million internet users in China (CTC, 2014). In this information era and surrounded by information from various sources, it is a trend for Chinese people travelling abroad. Using social networks for online advertising is more effective than traditional sources (CTC, 2013). Some local tourism service providers in Yukon, such as the Northern Tales and Arctic Range Adventure, have their tourism packages available on their official websites. Promotional activity for Chinese markets includes Mandarin and Cantonese literature, online

material and a Chinese social media page (Letts, 2017). It is important to understand not only the cultural differences but also that the experiential factors are shown online for Chinese tourists to gain insights into their travel experiences. Based on the research conducted by CTA (2014b), the two main reasons for Chinese tourists to travel to Canada are to sightsee and to visit friends and relatives (p. 117). Thus, displaying relevant promotional material online in a suitable way and providing competitive tourism packages can largely meet their experiential requirements.

Addressing the unique cultural values of Chinese visitors, the tourism experience is strongly related to cultural values (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Although Chinese tourists may have different destination choices and may prefer different tourism products, they share many of the same values of their culture (Cho, Kwon, Gentry, Jun, & Kropp, 1999). In traditional Chinese culture, there are three systems of thought: Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism (Guang, 2013). These three systems are integrated with each other and form the main stream of Chinese cultural values. They emphasize that nature is an integral part of the essential laws of man and returning to nature is the way to find one's true self. Studies that have examined the relationships between tourism and Chinese values (Kwek & Lee, 2010; Li & Cai, 2011) note that behavioral intention and the tourism experience are mostly affected by internal values. The cultural values behind tourism can be identified by understanding Chinese cultural or Chinese visitors' values.

2.4.3 Chinese concepts of winter tourism.

China is located in a temperate zone and has four distinct seasons. Influenced by farming culture, winter represents collection, convergence and rest in Chinese culture. Mozi, a Chinese philosopher during the 'Hundred Schools of Thought' period, and Xunzi, a Chinese Confucian philosopher who lived during the 'Warring States' period, said that storing in winter means not only mentoring agricultural practices but also winterizing the soul (Hong, 2006). Based on the theory of ying-yang, the five elements and enforcing stability in the universal order, the element of water is located in the north, stands for black and winter and is interpreted to mean that all things should be stored in winter silently. Thus, winter is not a good season to go outside for the

ancient Chinese (Chen, 1991; Li, 2014, p.276) and, as a result, winter is historically the low season in China with fewer costs and less crowding.

However, by understanding the winter aliases in Chinese culture, we can feel Chinese love for winter and hopeful emotions. By Sui Bibliography text, the ancient Chinese called winter “Northland”. In Chinese culture, the ‘Old Man of the North Pole’ is the Taoist symbol of longevity. Also, the ‘North Star Emperor’ of the Taoist religion lives in the north, considered the blessed place where winter resides. Additionally, Xiao Yi, an emperor of the Chinese Liang dynasty, recorded that winter is also called "the peace" (as cited in Chen, 1991, para.1). Thus, winter means praying and blessing.

The essence of Chinese culture has always been reflected in a love of nature and the value of “harmony between man and nature”. Many Chinese ancient cultural celebrities were tourists, such as Xu Xiake, who was a Ming dynasty travel writer and geographer. There were many poets who travelled and sang their praises for winter. For instance, winter was portrayed as vibrant and full of energy by Li Bai and Bai Juyi’s poets, Lidong and Zaodong. The Chinese always show their preference for snow. Snow reflects the aesthetics of the Chinese nation visually and mentally and represents the pursuit of nobleness and elegance (Zhu, Zhang, & Shi, 2015, para.3). Snow is one of four elements in Chinese poetry. Its crystal white, considered pure and noble, wins the praise from countless poets (Zhu, Zhang, & Shi, 2015, para.2).

Many northern citizens prefer the cold and winter or winter activities rather than warmer areas as they are accustomed to the harshness of winter. Li et al. (2016) found that some groups of people wanted to chase the snow in the north because they came from a region where it rarely snowed and had never experienced that kind of coldness (China Highlights, 2017). This alternative type of winter tourism satisfies a desire for challenging experiences associated with nature, learning and status enhancement (Silva, Abrantes, & Lages, 2009).

Winter tourism is a new trend in the tourism industry and has been accepted by Chinese visitors as a new type of travelling experience for worldwide destinations. Since Beijing

succeeded in bidding for the 2022 Winter Games in 2015, some regional governments have unveiled policies to promote the “ice and snow tourism” industry (Pengying, 2017). Winter tourism in northern regions is becoming one of the most attractive types of tourism for Chinese travellers no matter what attractiveness is at play.

2.5 The Role of Tour Guides

Generally, the performance of tour guides can greatly influence the tourist experience. Research on tour guides has focused on the identity role and service quality, which is crucial to the tourism experience and tourist satisfaction (Bowie & Chang, 2005; Hansen & Mossberg, 2017; Heung, 2008; Wong, 2001). Schmidt (1979) and Pearce’s (1982) early contributions identified the role of the tour guide as “buffer” between travellers and the environment. Schmidt (1979) stated that a tourist is not only a coach but also an interpreter. Cohen (1985) identified two roles for the modern tour guide: “pathfinder” and “mentor.” A tour guide’s interpretation focuses on both the sights themselves and the destinations’ management issues (Beckmann, 1989). Fishbein and Manfredi (1992) argued that the guide’s interpretation, as related to First Nations artifacts, educates visitors in cultural knowledge, which influences visitors’ positive attitude toward the culture.

Another important role of the guide is as a storyteller (Bryon, 2012). Hansen and Mossberg (2017) discussed how a guide’s assistance through storytelling can facilitate visitors’ immersion into an unfamiliar destination. Weiler and Davis (1993) noted, in the context of nature-based tourism, the tour guide can be seen as the “motivator” and “environmental interpreter”. Guides handle problems and make the environment safe for tourists. In a natural environment, guides should be responsible for visitors’ comfort and safety (Curtin & Wilkes, 2005).

The role of the guide as mediator and tour coordinator has been investigated by such scholars as Cohen (1985) and Beedie (2003). In her study of Yukon guides, de la Barre (2013) pointed out that guides create an opportunity for intimate exchanges with the destination and can affect tourism product development in relation to sustainable tourism development. In summary,

and as many researchers have discussed, including Weiler and Black (2015), it is important to understand and sustain the multiple roles and functions of tour guides.

2.6 The Concept of the Tourist Experience

Tourism experiences are different from everyday experiences (Cohen, 1979; Graburn, 2001). According to Larsen (2007) and Volo (2009), the tourist experience refers to a series of highly complex psychological processes or individual psychological phenomena occurring from subjective interpretations of the travelling experience. Selstad (2007) defined the tourist experience as a combination of novelty and familiarity involving the individual pursuit of identity and self-realization. The tourist experience is something subjective but also closely associated with the tourist's current perception of their current condition.

The tourist experience is a collection of best-remembered moments of the tourist. Those moments can be positive or negative with strong emotional fluctuation. Affective responses, including emotion, are key dimensions of leisure experiences (Lee & Shafer, 2002; McIntyre & Roggenbuck, 1998). We can expand understanding of the outcomes of recreation and tourism experiences by focusing specifically on emotional responses. Emotions can be considered the different mood subset of certain affective states (Lambie & Marcel, 2002).

According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), the experience economy is the final phase of an economic progression with four main groups of experiences: education, escapism, esthetics and entertainment. This experience economy concept is applicable to tourism industries. Mehmetoglu and Engen (2011) attempted a successful trial utilizing the four groups of experience framework in two tourism contexts: a winter-based event and a year-round museum. It revealed the positive joint effect of emphasizing and adopting a multi-dimensional experience in the field of tourism. To better develop tourism, a primary goal of tourism management is to provide high-quality experiences.

Forbes (1925) pointed out contemplation of nature and wilderness, creating the pure image, offers the highest of human values, aesthetics and morality. Many tourists view travelling in a

natural environment as creating positive emotional experiences (Ulrich,1983; Williams & Harvey, 2001). Extraordinary tourism experiences promote a connection with friends and strangers, personal growth and the renewal of self and adventure (Arnould & Price, 1993; Hull, 1990). The tourist experience is formed by interactions between multiple factors, such as social-cultural conditions and self-identification (O'Dell, 2007). Therefore, an analysis of the tourist experience from different dimensions expands extra thinking directions and the influx of sources of information.

2.7 Sustainable Tourism Development

The idea of 'sustainability' was prompted by the 1987 release of the World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED] Brundtland Report, entitled 'Our Common Future' (WCED, 1987). A central theme of the Brundtland Report is to "meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, p.37). Sustainable development involves the three mutually dependent components of economic, socio-cultural and environmental factors. Sustainable tourism is defined as "tourism which meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future" (WTO, 1993, p. 7). Sustainable tourism development results from the balance of interrelation between these three aspects, illustrated in Figure 4, demonstrating a dynamic

equilibrium among environmental, economic and social aspects (Janusz & Bajdor, 2013).

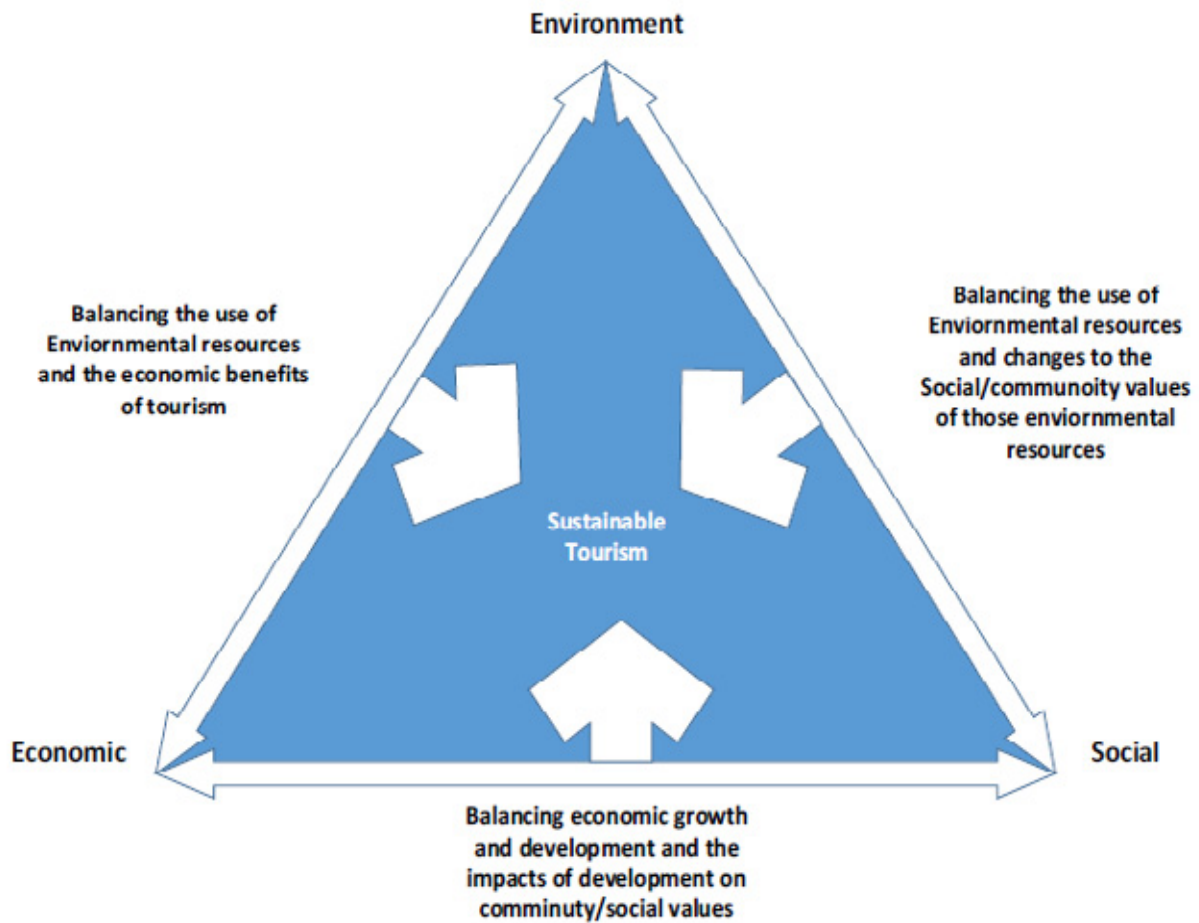


Figure 4. Dimensions of sustainable tourism (Janusz & Bajdor, 2013, p.524).

The goal of any sustainable development project is to find an optimal way of fulfilling all the requirements of the concept. Hence, as a subset of sustainable development, sustainable tourism can be explained as tourism that develops in consideration of the three aspects and becomes a resource for future generations. Sustainable tourism can be defined as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005, p.12; WTO, 2018).

Sustainable tourism development is a major guiding principle of the United Nations. To that end, 2017 was declared the ‘International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development’. The WTO (2018) also specifies that sustainable tourism should:

1) make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity; 2) respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance; and, 3) ensure viable, long-term economic operations, that provide an equitable distribution of socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders, and include stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities and contribute to poverty alleviation (pp. 3).

The sustainable tourism concept is initially linked to the natural environment and secondarily linked to social, cultural and economic considerations (Baros & David, 2007). Holden (2000) pointed out that ‘environmentally-led tourism’ is where types of tourism, that are reliant upon a high-quality environment, are promoted (p.173). Baros and David (2007) also mentioned some forms of tourism, such as nature tourism (i.e. hiking and camping), are assumed to be responsible, cause the least change to the resources and most likely to be sustainable. Sustainable tourism development not only concerns economic, social and environmental tourism development, but also high-quality tourism experiences (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Hashemkhani Zolfani, Sedaghat, Maknoon, & Zavadskas, 2015; Sharpley, 2000; Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2014; WCED, 1987). Bramwell and Lane (1993) stated that optimizing local economic resources, protecting the natural environment and providing a high-quality experience for visitors creates positive changes to sustainable tourism. WTO (2001) stated that four main factors affect a successful sustainable tourism project: the participation of local community, cooperation

among various partners, environmental commitment and continuous monitoring of the performance.

Baros and David (2007) claimed that a sustainable welfare system could be thought of as the establishment of a reference standard. Figure 5 presents a sustainable development system, tourism indicators and its relationship to people’s life quality.

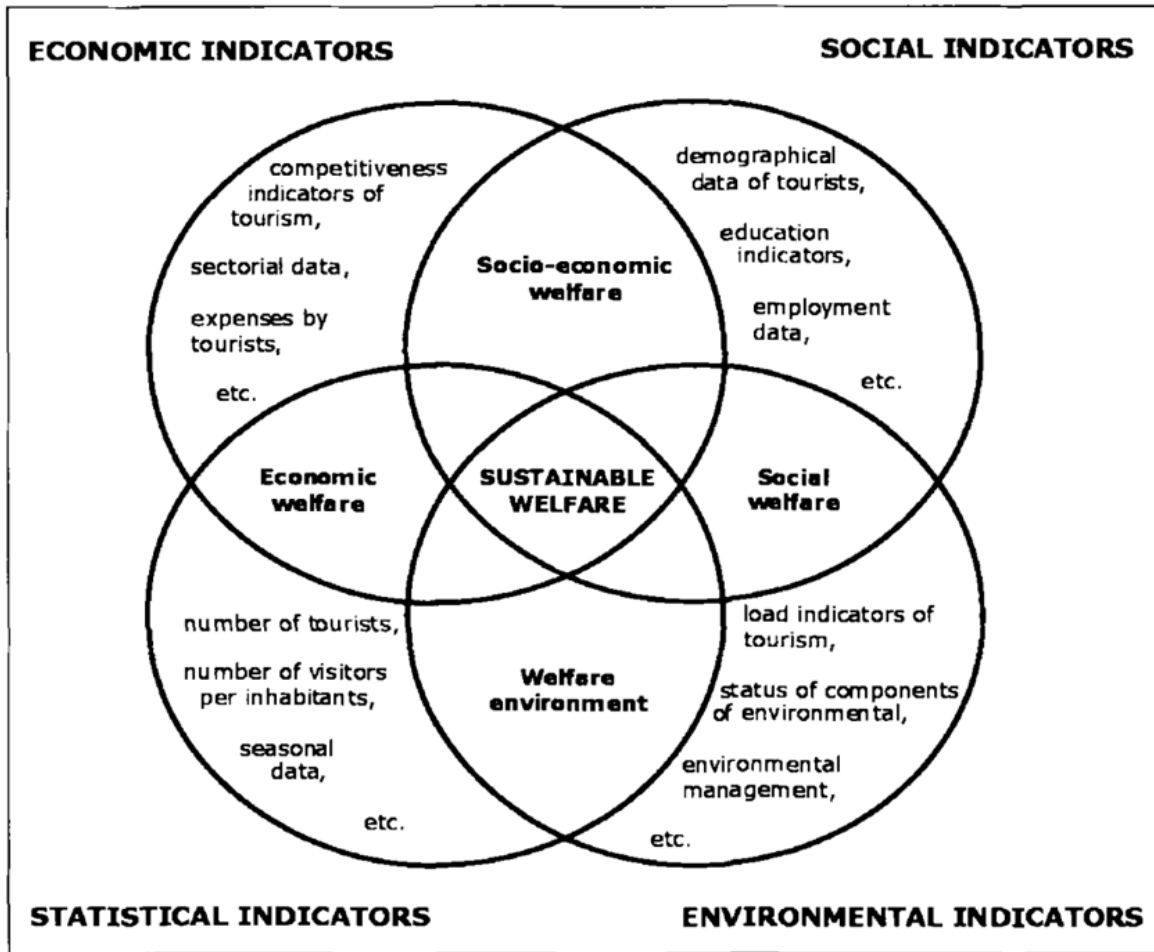


Figure 5. The system of sustainable development, tourism indicators and life quality (Baros & David, 2007, p.351).

Tourism firms that adopt a ‘triple bottom line’ (TBL) approach to sustainable development ensure that social, environmental and economic information is integrated into managerial decision-making. The concept of sustainable tourism development has become almost universally accepted as a desirable and politically appropriate approach to tourism development (Sharpley, 2000). Since developing sustainable tourism is beneficial to a range of stakeholders of

the local community for common interests, this approach should be a process that gathers endeavours from all parties to facilitate the progress. An agenda for sustainable tourism can be articulated as a set of twelve objectives that address economic, social and environmental impacts (see Figure 6). According to Karas and Ferencova (2012), a framework of sustainable tourism benefits certain regions or authorities in establishing a sustainable tourism strategy (as cited in Janusz & Bajdor 2013).

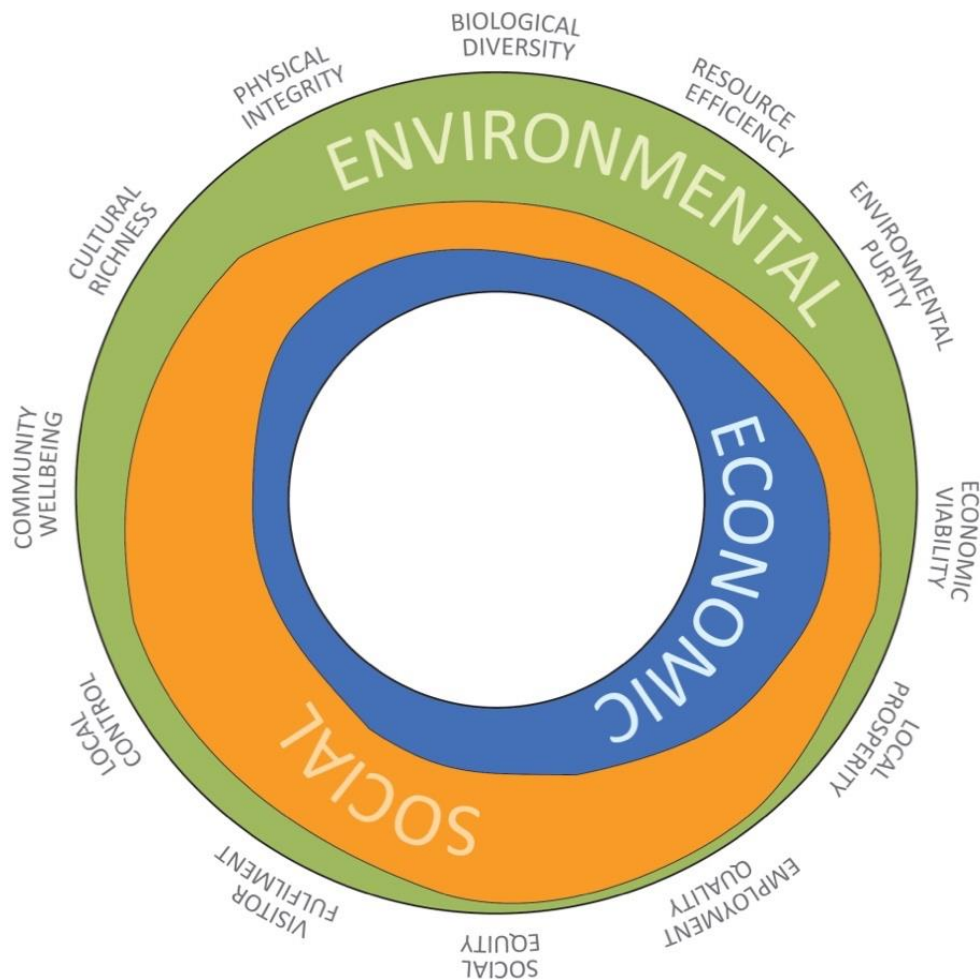


Figure 6. Framework of sustainable tourism (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005, p.20).

Concern for sustainability, that is applied to tourism development, alters how tourism activities and experience are framed or designed. Responsible tourism in the circumpolar north

has been encouraged. The number of tourists travelling to the north is small and visitors can appreciate and respect nature while providing additional income to local communities and traditional lifestyles, especially in winter. The essence of responsible tourism is resource management. Tourism in the circumpolar north has been present long enough to have established recognizable patterns of procedure and to have accumulated extensive management experiences. According to Snyder (2007a), one way to achieve responsible tourism is to document and learn tourism management techniques thoroughly. Existing resource management techniques, such as resource conservation programs, industry practices, jurisdictional responses, economic strategies and community opinions and expectations, provide the basis for sustainable polar tourism policies and practices and, therefore, needed to be employed (Snyder, 2007a). While tourism is growing in numbers of visitors, the polar environment itself is experiencing significant change. Based on the current knowledge of northern polar conditions and the ways in which polar tourism functions, good management practices to conserve the environmental and cultural integrity of the polar regions should be implemented.

2.7.1 Sustainable Arctic tourism indicators.

In the Arctic, tourism is even more closely connected to nature and sustainability (Vaarala, 2006). Environmental concerns about the Arctic have grown in the public sphere. According to Baros and David (2007), sustainable destination tourism management must address the economic, social and environmental issues of that particular area. As argued by Higgins-Desbiolles (2006), tourism is not merely an industry but rather a social force with deep transformative capacities for societies, cultures and the environment. Thus, the Arctic environment, as a unique and sensitive ecosystem, needs sustainable tourism to support its protection (Responsible travel, 2018).

Arctic social indicators (ASIs) are defined as "simple measurements of key phenomena, which track the direction and rate of change, and thus performance in various domains, as well as progress toward specified goals" (Larsen, Schweitzer & Petrov, 2014). Arctic indicators measure

and estimate the level of sustainable tourism. Rapid change in Arctic tourism demands people's attention and calls for an in-depth understanding, including the development of a set of indicators to help facilitate the tracking, monitoring and assessment of development progress (Orttung, 2016). Under the auspices of the Icelandic Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR) was developed to provide a comprehensive knowledge base for the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Program (Larsen & Fondahl, 2014). In 2003, six principles for sustainable Arctic tourism were agreed upon, which were the protocols in facilitating the development of sustainable tourism operations in the Arctic area (see Appendix C) and used in tourism companies, communities, regional tourist boards, organizations and among landowners (Vaarala, 2006). These principles offer a set of indicators for further research to measure sustainable Arctic tourism development in a broader context.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The methodology is the overall work plan for the research and a systematic means to pursue a specified goal. In the social sciences, the methodology has come to signify the standardized procedures through which research is carried out and evaluated (Dann, Nash & Pearce, 1988, p. 4). Tourism is an information intensive industry (Cox, Burgess, Sellito, & Buultjens, 2009). Tourism websites contain text and images that create an impression of the destination marketed to specific visitors and reflect the tourist experience (Rakić & Chambers, 2011).

In this section, the philosophical and methodological factors that have shaped the choice of research design used in this study are examined. The majority of studies in the social sciences are conducted in terms of qualitative research design (Stebbins, 2001). Qualitative research relies on interpretivism as a general philosophy. Interpretivism “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study to gain insight into the experiential features, presented in the researcher’s journal and from tourism websites, to establish their relationship to sustainable tourism. First, the qualitative research and the interpretive/constructive paradigm are presented, followed by a description of the researcher’s positionality and an explanation of ethical considerations. Then, a description of the field notes data collection methods and website content analysis and their use of data collection is discussed, as well as a presentation on trustworthiness.

3.2 Research Approach

3.2.1 Interpretivist/Constructivist paradigm.

The positivist paradigm and interpretivist/constructivist paradigm align with quantitative research and qualitative research respectively (Maxwell, 2012). The positivist paradigm emphasizes the independence of the researcher apart from the research participants in order to

avoid influencing the research participants. In contrast, in the interpretive paradigm, the researcher and the participant are encouraged to be interactive to uncover the informative data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013). Cohen et al. (2013) asserted that, by understanding “the subjective world of human experience”, the research can gain understanding of participants’ interpretation of the world where they live (p. 17). Generally, constructivism is often combined with interpretivism (Creswell, 2014a, p. 8). Interpretive research seeks to form an understanding of social reality through an exploration of the ways in which people come to perceive their world and experiences (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). This epistemology falls within a constructivist paradigm, in which knowledge is understood as a subjective and highly personal experience that is created by the “meaning maker” within a specific, temporal and geographic context (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). This study will be informed by a constructionist epistemology instead of objective reality, focusing on the various meanings with which our worlds are implanted (Chen, Shek, & Bu, 2011) because every visitor has a unique experience that describes their tourist experience.

Constructivism, constructionism, or social constructivism are terms coined by Berger and Luckmann (1966) and the meaning of these terms lies in the concept of “construction.” The researchers believed that, through the three processes of externalization, objectification and internalization, the reality of daily life can be built by community members’ social behaviour and refers to the subjective world of individuals’ beliefs about the world. Constructivism is used in human science, including researching tourism, as a social and cultural phenomenon (Iwashita, 2003; Chronis, 2012; Wilson, 1994). For instance, the process of determining a tourist destination is a typical construction process (Ma, 2011). Culler (2007) pointed out that tourists’ experiences are largely socially constructed products, built in a covert manner. The authentic tourist experience is affected by various factors, such as education, culture and social status (Culler, 2007). Meanwhile, tourists’ subjective feelings are related to the distinctiveness of various customs or cultural practices in the attractions (Culler, 1990).

The constructivist paradigm is associated with pluralism, not relativism, which are social philosophical terms with different philosophical significance (Moore, 2009). The constructivist paradigm claims that more than one reality exists and reality continues to change. A constructivist paradigm was used for this study because it allowed for an exploration that was sensitive to how individuals view the world from the subjective viewpoint of their unique experiences rooted in cultural and historical foundations (Creswell, 2014a). Because the researcher views reality within its social settings, this study interpreted the visitors' experience through a sense-making process rather than a hypothesis testing process. Chen et al. (2011) claimed that "constructionist researchers are required to reflect on how their own conceptions, values, experiences, interests, social identities and so forth affect the research, as well as to reflect on how the researcher's epistemological stance influences the research process and its findings" (p. 135). Thus, constructionism requires an attitude of reflexivity. In this study, the researcher's multiple identities include being a researcher, a member of a social world, a researcher studying Chinese winter tourism in Yukon and a Chinese visitor to Yukon.

3.2.2 Qualitative research.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) defined qualitative research as a situated activity which is diverse in researching methodology and focused on an interpretative research approach to the subject matter. Qualitative research helps researchers understand the perspectives of the studied population, the causes and effects and the developing process of a certain phenomenon (Maxwell, 2012). Issues can be explored through a diverse lens by adopting qualitative research methodology to reveal and understand one phenomenon thoroughly (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). Hence, the qualitative method preserves the complexity of human behaviour by gathering results from an integrated series of perspectives rather than by adopting a simplified view with a limited vision.

Qualitative research requires a close look at the phenomena and gives detailed descriptions of processes whereas quantitative research tends to generalize findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Tracy (2012) summarized three core concepts of qualitative research: ‘context’, ‘thick description’ and ‘self-reflexivity’. ‘Context’ means the researcher needs to engage in a specific environment to access data and information (Tracy, 2012). By directly connecting with the subjects, qualitative researchers can interpret the subjects’ contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), for example, by experiencing and observing winter tourism in person. ‘Thick description’ refers to thorough engagement with the subjects’ background, knowledge, personal history and culture. The researcher interprets what is experienced and observed so that a rich description and a wider conclusion can be gained (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Tracy, 2012). Thus, these concepts emphasize researchers’ understanding rooting their immersion in research contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.3). As for ‘self-reflexivity,’ according to Tracy (2012), the researcher’s background, knowledge, personal history and culture influence the design and implementation of qualitative research. As Goodson and Phillimore (2004) pointed out, the process of undertaking qualitative methodology in a study allows researchers to understand more of the human dimension of society and the corresponding cultural implications. Therefore, all of these characteristics of qualitative research outlined here makes it a suitable methodology for this study.

3.3 Researcher Positionality

Lin (2015) claimed all knowledge is necessarily incomplete and the positioning of the researcher necessarily affects the design of the research. As the individual is limited by their own edge of recognition and knowledge, the occurrence of positional bias is unavoidable. Lin (2015) further pointed out, within the process of conducting academic research, means of addressing researcher positionality is a method to avoid personal positional bias. Merriam et al. (2001) mentioned that the researcher should be aware of their position, especially if the study is related to race, gender or culture (England, 1994; Rose, 1997). Since bias remains a naturally occurring human characteristic, social science researchers need to understand their own subjective position and utilize self-reflection about their own placement (England, 1994).

In this study, the researcher's position functioned dually as both a researcher and a Chinese visitor in engaging with the research topic, participating in winter tourism, observing winter tourism in Yukon and in the analysis of websites. As a two-year resident in Canada, the researcher experienced a new perspective from that experienced for twenty years in China, witnessed a different lifestyle and experienced a process of self-adjustment and was the motivation for choosing the research subject of Chinese visitors who chose Canada as their tourism destination.

In this study, there are two main data sources that contributed to the findings: field notes collected by using observational techniques, including direct observation and participant observation, and textual data retrieved from tourism websites. Content analysis of the data was used to gain insight into the tourist experience and into the relationships of those experiences to sustainable tourism development.

I am both a researcher and a visitor in this research. I travelled in Yukon and observed from a researcher's point of view during the daytime. At night, I switched my identity and thought like a visitor. I separated one identity from the other and this is how I generated my reflective journal during my stay in Yukon. The reflective journal reflected, to a degree, Chinese visitors' common thoughts. These two types of data, together with my lifelong experience living in China, were my baseline for interpreting the Chinese visitor perspective in the context of winter tourism in Yukon. When all the necessary data was collected, I devoted part of the discussion, in the analysis stage of the research, to the role that my reflexive position played throughout the entire research experience.

3.4 Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research is a method for exploring emotional subjects, such as feelings, perspectives and experiences (Creswell, 2014b). Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed a four-point system to ensure research quality of overall trustworthiness that included credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Park (2002) used website content analysis to

analyze tourism marketing in Korea in a study that stimulated research related to website-based tourism marketing. Other studies also used qualitative content analysis to assess tourism perception. A study of Chinese tourists' destination perception of New Zealand (Sun, Ryan, & Pan, 2015) found that destination marketing organizations influence potential tourists through blogs and, additionally, noted that tourists' perception of place can be assessed.

In order to enhance the overall trustworthiness of this study, several measures were integrated during the research process. To ensure dependability, the researcher observed the same winter tourism experience at different times, taking extensive field notes on-site and post-travel. Also, data sources came from reflective responses and related official tourism websites. Two frameworks were employed: the multi-influential elements of the experiential framework and the Arctic sustainable tourism development analytical framework.

In addition, confirmability is important for qualitative research because it ensures the findings of the work are based on the outcome of the experiences and ideas of the informants rather than the conjecture of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability is established by tracking of data collection, data analysis and interpretation of the data. The researcher's thoughts about themes were recorded and then explained in terms of what the themes meant with regard to Chinese cultural values. The findings revealed a relationship of experiential features with a unique Chinese cultural background because the association was not causal with the researcher's own background. In this study, aside from research-supported explanations, some classical works of ancient Chinese poetry demonstrated associative meaning and imagery. Therefore, parts of the analysis and findings were explained from a Chinese cultural perspective rather than from the researcher's personal theoretical perspective.

3.5 Methodology

3.5.1 Introduction.

The methodology is the system the researcher uses to collect particular data of relevance. In this research, the researcher's field notes, tour operators' websites and tourism materials from the

Yukon Government were used for data collection. The data were analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis requires the researcher to gather and then collate the collected information. The filed note data collection method used the self-depicted experience journal during and after visiting Yukon. Website selection required the website to have a Chinese language support function in order to access the Chinese visitors' market.

3.5.2 Content analysis.

Content analysis is extensively used in qualitative research as a method to analyse data (Shaw, Elston, & Abbott, 2004). By using content analysis, data, that is textual or audio-visual, can be systematically categorized, recorded and analyzed to increase understanding of a specific topic (Decrop, 2004).

In this study, content analysis was used to identify experiential features and the relationship between these features and Arctic sustainable tourism development. Content analysis enriched understanding of the winter tourism experience in the context of China. To ensure the findings are analyzed by one analytic approach and avoid the bias of data, the content analysis method demands the use of multiple sources of data (Stemler, 2001). For this study, this method was relevant because it provided supplementary information about the on-site experience of winter tourism for Chinese visitors in addition to information that tourism websites provided online. Data was collected and analyzed from various perspectives, allowing for a deeper understanding of the data content.

3.5.3 Data collection methods.

Data collection methods are systematic techniques to gather information (Orkin, 2014). The five main data collection methods used in social science are surveys, interviews, observations, experiments and accessing archival data (Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2014). Descriptions of qualitative data collection methods “convey meaningful information in a form other than numbers” (Dey, 1993, p. 13). Qualitative data can be created and generated by observing behaviours and texts to understand how people experience and interpret the social world (Mason,

2017). The two data collection methods used in this study were: 1) field notes from the Yukon Winter Tourism Field School, and 2) Yukon tourism websites.

3.5.3.1 Field notes of Yukon winter tourism.

For the purpose of this study, a personal journal was written by the researcher. Narrative writing is a fundamental carrier of knowledge and history (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013), and reveals the personal feelings of an individual (Richardson, 1997). Bochner, Ellis and Tillmann-Healy (1997) further elaborated, stating that the stories people tell about their lives is both a means of “knowing” and a way of “telling” about the social world. In this research, I recollected and generalized my visitor experience, regarding travelling in Yukon from a visitor perspective, as a way to include the Chinese visitor travel experience in this research on the pursuit of experiential features.

A journal, in essence, is a collection of personal interpretations from a certain kind of culture. Hess (2018) noted that the experience of engaging the cultural context, makes the ethnographer more of an insider. Simultaneously, when the researcher carries their personal experiences as an outsider into the experience, their understanding of the culture is altered and they lose the outsider’s perspective. Thus, an ongoing self-reflexivity is necessary for the researcher to understand their identity and to prevent “the insider-outsider dilemma” (Hess, 2018, p. 215). The researcher’s personal journal was written from a participant observation perspective in order to interpret the experience from a subjective positioning. Generating a reflective journal was a thought-provoking process that deepened understanding of the context of Yukon winter tourism. Moreover, using the reflective journal in this study included perspectives from both sides and allowed for the diverse analysis in the next chapter.

When an author frames their experience in the context of stories, the author is able to illustrate and communicate their opinions and thoughts to others when those stories are showcased (Bochner, Ellis, & Tillmann-Healy, 1997). In fieldwork, the researcher is privileged by “being there” to experience the subject matter as it occurs in the local context (Endres, Hess,

Senda-Cook, & Middleton 2016). In this study, the researcher “weaved” together different pieces of data from the field work, creating a reflective journal that documented experiences as “stories” by carefully revisiting all of the researcher’s travel experiences in Yukon. This revisiting required deep reflection and recollection to finalize and present the whole story in a narrative way.

As much information as possible should be recorded in field notes. Data collection occurs by using ‘headnotes’, ‘scratch notes’ and ‘typed notes’ to record experiential data (Barnard & Spencer, 2002, p.248). Headnotes and scratch notes are the jottings that describe everything that can be remembered or written on-site. It is best to record field notes immediately after leaving the site to avoid forgetting important details. From the scratch notes, organized, descriptive notes are created to supply enough factual evidence for the final report (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017).

As part of observing winter tourism experiences in Yukon, the researcher had many informal conversations about winter tourism experiences with different groups of people, such as locals, people managing Chinese restaurants and workers in shops. The researcher was deeply embedded in the winter tourism area and enthusiastically engaged with the subject matter relevant to the research. Additionally, extensive reading from the context of Arctic winter tourism gave the researcher a clear timeline of the development of Yukon. While in Yukon, the researcher engaged in conversations with people who worked in the tourism industry to explore their perspectives of Yukon as this was the most effective way for the researcher to accumulate knowledge and to elicit ideas.

3.5.3.2 Yukon tourism websites.

As Choi, Lehto, and Morrison (2007) indicated, online communicated destination identity holds many innovations and promises in terms of sustainable marketing management and positioning. As it is difficult for visitors to experience tourism or form a clear image of a destination without physically being there, the multimedia interactive nature of the internet can add a whole new dimension to tourist destination marketing. In the information era, the development of the

internet has changed the way people live, study, entertain and communicate with each other (Choi, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007). The Internet has become the frontline of brand construction and product presentation as it is informative, easily accessible with the availability of secure and stable online payment channels and low-cost daily management services (Candemir, Ventura, & Kazançoğlu, 2011). With acknowledgment of the advantages mentioned above, it is natural for business administrators to set up their own channel to network and manage their business in this era. Seeing its broad range of application for many walks of life, the internet is now an important communication channel between tourism suppliers, intermediaries and potential visitors (Kwon & Jeong, 2015).

Both textual and image-based data was collected and analysed from online information sources. It is because that analysing visual images and written materials together makes the understanding much richer (Rose, 2013, p. 88-89; Rose, 2016a, p.121). Rose (2013) also pointed out that detailed scrutiny of the image itself is the foundation of a critical visual methodology. The visual data analysis relates to the “compositional interpretation”, which embraces many parts, highlighting expressive characters, such as the content, spatial organization and certain colors, light, and tone of the image. (Rose, 2016b, p. 62). Images on tourism websites were collected and scrutinized in this study to produce visual signification of what Chinese visitors would describe as a close reading of the image. The results of the visual analysis assisted in interpreting and summarizing the meaning of the experiential feature as portrayed and represented on tourism websites, as well as how these representations reflect the Chinese visitor’s experience.

There is no single standard way to address selection of appropriate websites. Here, two main streams of textual data sources were identified to provide context and help answer the first research question (*What are the experiential features of winter tourism and how are they promoted to Yukon’s Chinese visitor market?*). This study ensured that each website had a language support function or that the website could be translated into a Chinese version. This

was important because the Chinese visitors in this research were not all proficient in English. The similar category includes but is not limited to on-site seasonal activities and graphics/animation presentation level. Table 1 summarizes the basic information available on a series of local tourism companies' websites and one destination marketing organization website page. Additionally, a selected conclusion of sixteen websites displaying the websites' basic information is presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Website information matrix.

Categories	Filter criteria
Company name	The name of company and the website address is written.
Location	Because the tourism destination is the Yukon, only those companies working in the Yukon are investigated.
Ownership	Indicating if the company is Canadian or Chinese is for the further study.
Language support	The Chinese version is important for Chinese visitors involved in this study because they may not be proficient in English.
Package components	On-site seasonal activities involved in the package are recorded, especially for winter tourism.
Photos and videos	Recording the visual content as texture data needs to list and convey the content by the descriptive language.

3.5.3.2.1 Yukon tourism websites' selection result.

Based on Table 1, a sifting process was used to find fifteen valid websites of tourism operators and a Yukon government destination marketing website page. The sifting process had three layers of analysis (see Figure 7).

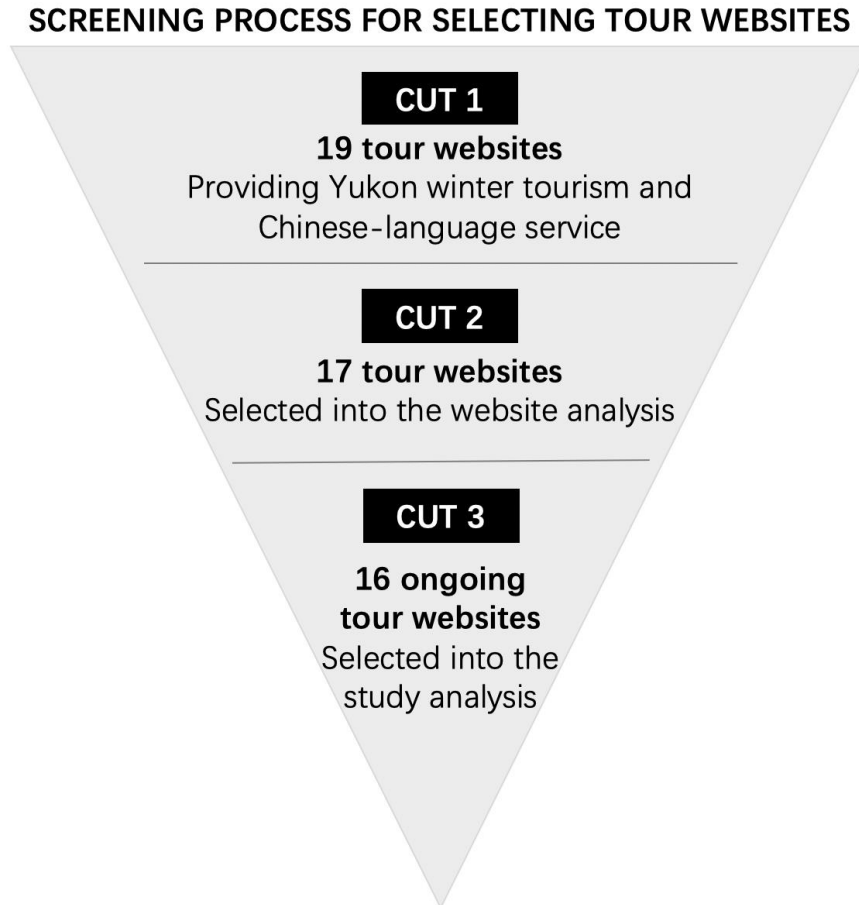


Figure 7. Screening process for selecting tour websites.

The study began with tour operators and destination marketing organizations conducting Chinese-language business in Yukon. There were 19 tour websites providing information about winter tourism in Yukon in their tour packages, that were used as a base set to begin the analysis. The next step was to identify and eliminate two tour websites which were temporarily closed down for maintenance or being blocked. Lastly, one tour website that did not consistently offer Chinese-language services was eliminated at this stage. These analytical criteria were used to repeat the website information analysis for remaining fifteen tour websites and one destination marketing organization website page. A better understanding of management, employment and other potential issues was gained by analyzing the nationality and visual data content of the website operator. In the end, sixteen websites made it through the three editing processes and into the research study.

Table 2 shows the basic information on the sixteen websites consisting of one Yukon government destination marketing organization website and fifteen tour operators' websites. Seven of the fifteen tour companies operated out of Yukon. The remaining eight tour operators brought Chinese visitors to Yukon (five were Chinese companies and three were located in Canada in Vancouver, BC, Richmond, BC and Calgary, AB). A detailed descriptive document of each website is stored in a separate appendix (Website basic information_Data File).

Table 2. Sixteen selected websites' basic information.

Name of Company	Website Address	Language Support
ARCTIC OUTBACK ADVENTURES	https://www.arcticoutback.com	Simplified Chinese; English
ARCTIC RANGE ADVENTURE	https://www.arcticrange.com/cn	Four languages
318 ARCTIC COLOUR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	http://www.318arcticcolourtours.com	Simplified/Traditional Chinese; English;
CANTRIP CANADA CO. LTD	http://can-trip.com/加拿大育空北极光探奇之旅/	Simplified Chinese
CHARMING HOLIDAYS	http://vancouver-charmingholidays.com/mobile.html	Simplified Chinese; English
CHINA INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL SERVICE DALIAN BRANCH	http://www.citsdlgh.com/dujial1840	Simplified Chinese
CTrip (携程旅行网)	https://you.ctrip.com/place/yukonterritory21575.html	Simplified Chinese
KEEP EXPLORING CANADA	https://canada.keepexploring.cn/places-to-go/yukon	Twelve languages
MAFENGWO (马蜂窝)	http://www.mafengwo.cn/travel-scenic-spot/mafengwo/65858.html	Simplified Chinese
QYER (穷游)	https://place.qyer.com/yukon-territory	Simplified Chinese
ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCENIC TOURS	http://www.amazingtravel.ca/tour/tourDetail/1/2/21	Simplified Chinese
RRUU (任游)	https://www.ruu.com	Simplified Chinese
TOP TOP INTERNATIONAL TOUR	http://www.ttit.ca	Simplified Chinese; English
TRAVEL YUKON	http://www.travelyukon.cn	Simplified Chinese; English
YUKON HOME AND TOUR	http://yukonhomeandtour.com/ch/	Simplified Chinese; English
YUKON WIDE ADVENTURES	http://yukonwide.com/en/yukon-winter-tours	Thirty languages

3.6 Analytical Frameworks

To uncover the experiential features and the relationship of those features to sustainable tourism development, a system for organizing the data needs to be developed after the data has

been collected (Merriam, 2014). Analytical frameworks used in this research were developed from relevant theoretical literature with minor modifications in order to adopt the research goal.

Analyzing the data using frameworks is believed to be an effective method to adopt to generate new theories (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). According to Avraamidou (2013), the framework is considered to be a useful tool in terms of guiding the direction of data analysis and invoking a bigger picture of the research topics as well as research questions. It is important to employ a theoretical framework in qualitative research in order to visualize the research findings in a meaningful way (Green, 2014). A total of two analytical frameworks were used in this study: the experiential feature matrix and the Arctic sustainable tourism development matrix. Each framework reflects the system for transforming the collected data into the research results as it is important to understand not only the theory but also the analytical logic flow behind it.

3.6.1 Experiential framework.

The experiential features were analysed based on the categories provided by the tourist experience theoretical framework. The framework, illustrated by Cutler and Carmichael (2010), is a conceptual model which is an inclusion of the organism from the literature indicated by many researchers. In this model, the tourist experience includes episodic activity-based phases that start with 'anticipation', 'travel to the site', 'on-site activity', 'return travel' and 'recollection' phases. The outcomes are directly related to the overall evaluation of the travel experience, which can be measured by the level of satisfaction (Ryan, 2002). The theoretical basis of this framework is the five-phase model developed by Clawson and Knetsch (1966).

There are additional factors in two different categories that are closely associated with the generation of the travel experience. In the tourist experience conceptual model, all factors are included in two categories: the influential realm and the personal realm (see Figure 8). The influential realm is focused on objective aspects, such as the spatial condition of the destination, the unique local social characteristics (customers), and the quality of the products and services available on site. On the other hand, the personal realm focuses on personal aspects of the tourist,

such as their education level, mechanism of memory filtration, interpretation of the sensible input, evaluation of their travel experience and their self-identity. The personal realm is connected to Clawson and Knetsch’s five-phase model. These personal factors influence expectations prior to travel while judgments made while travelling are a combined effect of the influential realm, personal realm and updated personal realm.

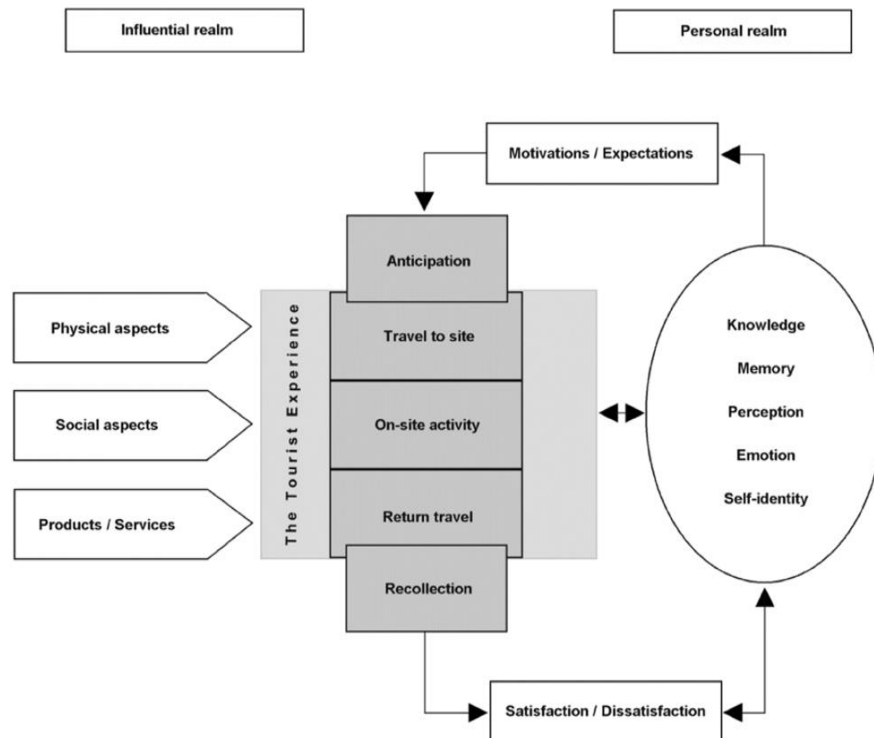


Figure 8. The tourist experience conceptual model of influence and outcomes (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010, p. 8).

By emphasizing the influential and personal realms that impact the experience, Cutler and Carmichael (2010) summarised the literature and integrated essential elements in understanding the tourist experience. Based on their work, an experiential framework for considering Chinese visitors’ experiential features was outlined. The elements, which underpin this framework, include physical aspects, social aspects, products/services, knowledge, memory, perception, emotion and self-identity; these elements belong to the influential and personal realms as shown in Figure 8 (also see Table 3).

Table 3. The multi-influential elements of the experiential framework.

Influential Realm			
Physical aspects	Social aspects	Products/Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical settings • Spatial characteristics • Geographical features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social settings • Personal relationships • Interactions w/ personnel • Interactions w/ other tourists • Host/guest relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tangible products (transportation, accommodation, facilities) 	
Personal Realm			
Knowledge			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Communication skills · Critical thinking skills · Cultural learning and awareness · Decision-making skills · Environmental learning/ Cognitive mapping · Geographic knowledge · General knowledge of history · Global understanding · Heightened home country awareness · World issues knowledge · Linguistic skills · Financial and material resources management · Problem-solving skills · Research skills · Time management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affective development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Dealing w/ pressure and stress · Making and maintaining relationships · Strengthening relationships · Patience · Responsibility · Tolerance of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychomotor development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Information literacy · Tool mastery · Physical skill enhancement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Adaptability/Flexibility · Independence · Interpersonal competence/Self-awareness · Leadership · Maturity · Open-mindedness to other viewpoints · Self-confidence · Self-initiated activity · Self-transition · Teamwork
Perception	Memory	Emotion	Self-identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How tourists perceive others? • How tourists perceive themselves? • How tourists perceive to be perceived by others? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narration of memory is representation of experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affective bond developed between humans and environment is the sense of place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel experience of understanding other cultures way to formulate + redevelop tourist's own identity

Data collected from the reflective journal and websites were allocated to the different sectors, which are detailed in two separate appendices as the original data collation (Field school journal data narratives_Data File and Website information analysis_Data File). Comments were added to the data to keep the constant interaction between the analysis and the findings. The result is one journal data document and sixteen separate documents of the website data with different data sources. Examples are found in above appendices.

Standards for processing the data and analyzing experiential features are based on the application of the specific attributes of the two realms, as outlined in the literature by Cutler and Carmichael (2010). For example, information related to the natural landscape of Yukon was allocated to the physical aspect, information related to the local community was allocated to the social aspect and information related to tour packages was allocated to the products/services aspect. Details of the analysis progress are introduced in Chapter 4.

3.6.2 Analytical framework for Arctic sustainable tourism development.

Possible solutions to address sustainability concerns in the Arctic tourism industry include development of a scientific tourism system, such as the SMART project, which is a sustainable model for Arctic regional tourism, and an evaluation index system for sustainable regional tourism development (Vaarala, 2006). By implementing these Arctic observation systems [AOSs], the environmental and socio-cultural ripple effects arising from increasing tourism activities were more easily observed in this study. And the matrix was adapted, from the work of Salter et al. (2003), to contain the economic, social-cultural, and environmental aspects.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council [GSTC] has set the minimum criteria, indicators and standards for sustainable tourism destinations [GSTC-D] (GSTC, 2013). Sub-categories of these set criteria, along with other sub-factors from the six principles for sustainable Arctic tourism, were applied to the matrix in this study (Vaarala, 2006, p.15). Table 4 illustrates the standards and relationship between visitors' experiential features and sustainable tourism development. The functional relation criterion between experiential features and sustainable

tourism indicators is established by analyzing the experience's influence on sustainable tourism. The "function" relationship refers to a certain experiential feature and is a means of affecting ASTD indicators. If experiential features were felt more strongly, ASTD indicators presented more comprehensively, indicating a positive relationship between them. Generally, there was a negative relationship between visitors' experience and over-development. In addition, experiential features and ASTD indicators had no relationship in some instances because indicators of ASTD were not always matched with the experiential features found above. As incoming source data, all experiential features were put into the analytical framework identifying the positive or negative relationship between visitors' experience and indicators of sustainable tourism development. The framework allowed for insight into how tourism experience impacts and is impacted by sustainable development (Arctic sustainable tourism development analytical matrix_Data file). All findings are shown in Chapter 4.

Table 4. The Arctic sustainable tourism development analytical framework.

Arctic Sustainable Tourism Development (ASTD) Analytical Indicator Building Blocks		
Socio-Economic Development		
• Level of Local Support Indicators	• Marketing Conditions Indicators	• Destination Management Indicators
· Government support	· Tourist market development	· Continuous performance monitoring
· Local community support	· Ability of access	· Local career opportunities
Cultural Development		
• Cultural Preservation and Innovation Indicators	• Coordination of Residents Indicators	
· Indigenous culture	· Cultural interaction with visitors	· Residents' satisfaction
· Cultural heritage	· Cultural resource utilization	· Local participation in tourism activities
Environmental Sustainability		
• Environmental Quality Indicators	• Basic Tourism Resources Indicators	
· Landscape quality	· Atmosphere quality	· Energy and water supply
· Water quality	· Light and noise pollution	· Land available for exploration
• Other Indicators		
· Wildlife protection	· Seasonality and risk management	· Adaptation of climate change
· Educating the public	· Solid, water and gas waste treatment	· Greenhouse gas emissions

3.7 Analytical Process

The analytical plan instructs the use of data collected and, more importantly, the use of data in relation to the theoretical frameworks. It is also the final step for transforming the recorded data into the research findings. Firstly, all data was input in the experiential feature matrix to draw conclusions and recorded in a separate table, which classified all specific contents into categories (see details in Website information analysis_Data File and Field school journal data narratives_Data File). The field journal (see Yukon Winter Experience _Data File) was viewed as the raw data. To address the first research question, *what are the experiential features of winter tourism and how are they promoted to Yukon's Chinese visitor market?*, irrelevant or redundant information was separated from the information eventually analyzed. The relevant information was filtered out by re-reading the data and allocating the information to its appropriate section in the matrix. The first set of experiential features were identified by loading the data into the framework, using a manual data sorting system (see narrative details in Field school journal data narratives _Data file; also see the summary of experiential features from field notes in Figure 9).

The same method for identifying experiential features was used to address data gathered from websites. The first step was the selection of websites, as explained in Section 3.5.3.2 above. To complete the website content analysis, all information on each website was viewed and the relevant details pertaining to the experiential feature matrix were extracted. Information collected and summarized from every single website was input into the categories accordingly. Each website generated a set of independent results based on the content, which were presented in Table 1 and stored in one separate document (see Website information analysis_Data file). After loading the data, there were sixteen independent files. In the end, the summary of experiential features from tourism websites' analysis can be found in Figure 10.

The experiential features were further used in the Arctic sustainable tourism development analytical matrix to answer the second research question (*What is the relationship between the*

experiential features promoted to Chinese winter tourism visitors to Yukon and sustainable tourism development?). All data from the experiential feature matrix was transferred to the analytical framework and into the narratives column in order to uncover the relationship of the experiential features to sustainable tourism development. Next, the relationship between experiential features marketed to Chinese visitors and the sustainable tourism development in Yukon was analysed as whether those features match the categories in this matrix or not

CHAPTER 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

To understand the experiential features and the relationship these experiences have to sustainable tourism development, two research questions were posed: 1) *what are the experiential features of winter tourism and how are they promoted to Yukon's Chinese visitor market?* and, 2) *what is the relationship between the experiential features promoted to Chinese winter tourism visitors to Yukon and sustainable tourism development?* Framed by these two research questions, the data were collected from the researcher's field school journal and tourism website content. The findings are presented in two parts. In Section 4.2, the experiential features of Yukon winter tourism are summarized in the sub-sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, based on two methods. Section 4.3 addresses the relationship between experiential features and Arctic sustainable tourism development.

4.2 Experiential Features of Yukon Winter Tourism

This section provides additional perspectives for understanding the experiential features of Yukon winter tourism based on exploring winter tourism designed for Chinese visitors and the researcher's detailed travel practices in the context of this study's first research question: *what are the experiential features of winter tourism and how are they promoted to Yukon's Chinese visitor market?* Section 4.2.1 presents the experiential features analyzed in a field school journal and Section 4.2.2 presents the experiential features obtained from the content of sixteen tourism websites. Lastly, Section 4.2.3 summarizes five themes from experiential features' findings.

Based on the tourist experience conceptual model, Cutler and Carmichael (2010) summarized that all factors that impact the tourist experience are included in two categories: the influential realm and the personal realm. The influential realm can be further categorized into the physical aspects, social aspects and products/services, which are seen as important elements in shaping tourists' experiences (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). The identified experiential features in

this study were also affected by elements within the personal realm. The personal realm includes aspects, such as knowledge, memory, perception, emotion and self-identity. To illustrate, visitors arrive at a destination with individual memories, perceptions of the place and people, knowledge about the world and understanding of self (Selstad, 2007). Thus, aspects from both the influential realm and personal realm can be seen as the overall travel experience (see Figure 9 and Figure 10).

4.2.1 Experiential features: Field notes of the Yukon winter tourism field school journal.

Through analysis of the journal, the researcher gained understanding of the winter tourism experiential features aimed at Chinese visitors through firsthand experience. In this section, the findings of the experiential features, identified from the Yukon winter tourism journal, are presented. As Farber and Hall (2007) stated, emotional responses contribute to overall recreation and tourism experiences. The reflection narratives in this study indicated the emotional or affective responses and reflective cognition. The findings include objective influential features and personal experiential features from the researcher's reflections. Figure 9 summarizes the findings of experiential features found through a content analysis.

		Experiential Features					
Influential Realm	Physical aspects	1. Snow and ice	Unforgettable, magnificent, serenity, calm.	• New impression of winter	Personal Realm (including knowledge, memory, perception, emotion and self-identity)		
		2. Mountains	Breath-taking, lofty, excitement, sacred, awe.	• Authenticity			
		3. Vast expanse of whiteness	Spectacular, pure, inner peace, return to nature, freedom.	• Chinese martial culture • Emotional contagion			
	Social aspects	1. Travelling as a group	Sharing, impressive, relaxed, friendship.	• Chinese culture • Self-examination			
		2. Hands-on practice	Skills gained, achievement, grateful.	• Communication			
		3. On-site social interactions	Respect, sharing, warm, friendly, equality, happy, joy, inner calm, politeness, courteousness.	• Growth experience • Self-improvement			
	Product/Services	1. Indispensable tour guide	Respect, educational, meaningful, friendly, warm.	• Communication • Approval from others • Sense of existence • Cultural background			
		2. Rendezvous festival	Nostalgic, exotic, unique, retro style.	• The transition of cultural shocks • Self-improvement • Learning natural and human history • Emotional contagion			
		3. Winter adventure activities	Pleasure, thrill, unique, exhilaration, skills gained, educational, frightened.	• Childhood memories • Local customs			
		4. Cultural products	Enjoyment, exotic, unique, love of nature.	• Authenticity • Experiencing strong motions • Self-examination • Learning new skills			
						• Respect for faiths and customs	
						• Self-examination	

Figure 9. A summary of experiential features from field notes.

Figure 9 was designed through organizing experiential features found in the journal. There are five elements within the personal realm: knowledge, memory, perception, emotion and self-identity. Some experiential features that emerged from the personal realm could be seen as outcomes because they shape the experience. As visitors arrive at a destination, a unique tourist experience can be built from visitors’ individual previous memories and perceptions. As shown in Figure 9, the tourist experience is influenced by aspects, such as individual memories, authentic perception, emotional contagion, Chinese cultural background and self-examination.

4.2.1.1 Features of physical aspects.

According to Cutler and Carmichael (2010), the physical aspects involve geographical features and place-based elements in one destination. The northern hemisphere has approximately 98 percent of the earth’s snow (Snow & Climate, 2019). Thus, ice and snow can be seen as synonymous with the north and winter. As my reflections demonstrate:

When I sat on the airplane, I saw the snowy view of the peak was magnificent. There are often a few inches of snow on the ground at higher elevations. All roads can be blocked

by the heavy snowfall and the winter is very long here, thus, there is no need to be excited to make a snowman in the yard. It is a norm that heavy snow is sifting onto the ground during winter. The first impression of the Yukon is so great, especially the white snow and the sound of boots touching the snow on the ground. I will never forget the crushing sound from our boots (Zhang, Field Notes, February 25, 2018).

Some classic winter activities, like making a snowman, are not as typical as the researcher imagined and found the snow and view in Whitehorse to represent serenity and calm. The spectacular view of snow elevated the desire to travel and strengthened expectations of a winter tour.

Yukon has a variety of natural scenery, such as frozen rivers, lakes, snowy mountains and forests. The alpine landscape is enticing and has a breath-taking northern charm all its own. However, the most striking geographical feature is the mountains. I wrote:

The forces of nature create the towering mountains. The mountains were visible to the horizon. This is one of my favorite things about being in Whitehorse, being nestled in all these mountains. On the trip home, the continuous hills were a tangible melody and made me and some teammates happily screaming in the van... In Whitehorse, the natural landscape and houses at the foot of the hills whose roofs covered with snow achieve a union through these mountains around the town. I had the urge to draw Chinese landscape paintings... What impressed me is the harmony from the stunning mountain features (Zhang, Field Notes, February 27, 2018).

I experienced an upbeat mood when seeing the boundless mountains and the excitement was contagious. From a Chinese cultural background, the mountains represented a lofty place for the researcher. The sense of wilderness of the white forest and mountains also brought a sense of the sacred, excitement, calm and awe:

After entering in the mountains, there was no noise, as if it was isolated from the noisy city (Zhang, Field Notes, March 1, 2018).

Seeing the mountains was stirring and awesome; it was truly a beautiful moment in the wilderness of the Yukon ... beauty beyond imagination ... only nature and solitude (Zhang, Field Notes, March 2, 2018).

Many descriptions of inspirational meditations and experiences in the journal are related to the natural scenery and these scenes often involved spectacular views and open spaces. Emotional intensity was high from being in nature, regardless of what activity we were involved in. Being away from the hustle and bustle of this city can create anxiety for some people, but I thought it is a good way to return to nature, restore peace, retreat to the inner clarity and find a sense of one's true self, and free of the stresses of the world. 陋室铭 (lòushì míng), *an Epigraph in Praise of My Humble Home*, a well-known ancient poem written by Yu Xi Liu in the 8th century, states that “without the disturbance of noise on ears or the solemn burden of social work, I can live better when I live alone” (Wu, 1981, p.90). Being cautious while alone or being true to yourself is the key concept of being alone. In Chinese philosophy, self-reflection or thinking on your own is the way to realize oneself and is the sublime goal of perfect humanity.

4.2.1.2 Features of social aspects.

The social environment and social interactions influence tourists' experiences (Nickerson et al., 2006; Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). The settings of the social environment can influence the interactions among tourists and the host/guest relationships. As a means of interacting with others, some social settings promote subtle inner reflections. Some examples of personal reflections from the researcher follow that underline the personal interaction and provide notions of more joy through communication.

During the field school trip, I had a lucky opportunity to join Emily Payne and Erin Nicolardi as part of their Rivers to Ridges Forest School Program in Whitehorse (<https://www.riverstoridges.org>). As part of the field school program, the group hiked as through a forest close to Whitehorse. The relaxing sharing communication during the walk was impressive. I wrote:

Since we hiked into the forest without cellphone reception, we started to share what we experienced and what we had seen. It is the most interesting part to share thoughts and impressions arising from walking (Zhang, Field Notes, March 1, 2018).

After losing the cellphone signal, the team members in the same group had more communication, more enthusiasm, more sincerity and more friendship.

In addition, Emily and Erin's hands-on demonstration showed how simple pieces, found in the forest, could be utilized, such as creating friction fires with a bow drill demonstration, which brought me a sense of achievement and further enforced the connection to the land. Connecting with nature is such an important aspect many of us are missing in modern life. As for me, who grew up in a city during decades of industrial take-off, it is hard to say that I have a deep affinity with nature. However, I was beginning to understand many artists have drawn their inspiration from nature and I, as well, started to enjoy the beauties of nature.

Similarly, some settings are designed to create more on-site interactions and an emotional connection with tourists. An example is, during the northern lights viewing tour delivered by a local tour operator, a world map hung in the log cabin for visitors to mark their hometowns and provided a great conversation starter.

The places visitors come are marked with colourful pins on the map of the world. I am excited to see two pins placed in China (Zhang, Field Notes, February 26, 2018).

In this way, sharing stories with others can create many meaningful connections and a way to show visitor's presence through the use of human design. A northern lights tour guide mentioned, "We were trying to encourage visitors from all over the world to share their own culture and stories". A third example occurred in the log cabin designed in a cozy way with people sitting around the wood stove, the fire crackling in the stove and snowflakes gently falling in the wilderness. This stove added to the romantic atmosphere. As I wrote.

Everyone is sitting together near the stove for warmth and propping our boots around it to dry. I could feel everyone is equal through eye contact. At this moment, there is no difference in social status, whether you are a professor, a student or a company manager. There is no upper and lower level. It is an unforgettable scene that ignites the spark of tender feelings in my heart (Zhang, Field Notes, February 26, 2018).

In China, people are often arranged to sit in lines to show their level of seniority or status. Sitting around the table or the bonfire without thinking of social status redefines the idea of equality and freedom. A world without class distinctions or hierarchy is called “大同 (dàtóng)”, or “the great together”, which is a quote from the chapter, *The Operation of Etiquette*, in the classic text, *礼记 (lǐjì)* or *Book of Etiquette* (Feng, 2008). *Confucianism* calls for universal harmony and relative equality.

Speaking of the interaction with locals, I wrote my experience of taking a walk and having a chat with citizens in Whitehorse on the natural scenery, I felt a sense of inner calm. I recorded in my journal “Near dusk I was walking around the city. Several seniors were enjoying the snow falling in the sunset...they told me they enjoy their lifestyle in the North” (Zhang, Field Notes, March 3, 2018). As *桃花源记 (táohuāyuánjì)*, *Taohuayuan Paradise* writes, that the elderly’s peaceful lives represents the thirsty of utopia in Chinese literature. The peace and quiet view made me feel happy and inner peace.

Finally, through the interactions I had with tourism industry related workers, politeness, respect, and courteousness are significant experiential characteristics. I wrote:

In the Whitehorse visitor information center, the staff gave me prompt service and she even seemed to be knowledgeable of the Asian market. She was happy to share with me that there are some restaurants run by Chinese immigrants and increasing visitors from the mainland China every year (Zhang, Field Notes, February 26, 2018)).

Social interactions not only convey a lively sense of communication but also enhance visitors’ sense of participation. Thus, respect experienced through friendly communications implies more than a courteous and deferential attitude, it refers to the experience of being taken seriously.

4.2.1.3 Features of products/services.

Like tangible products, the availability of intangible services is likewise related to the quality of the tourist experience (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). The willingness of staff to help customers and give individual attention positively affect my visiting experience.

4.2.1.3.1 *Services of tour guides.*

The tour guide plays an prominent role as a translator, an information provider, a tour designer and a story-teller who can mobilize visitors' mood. According to the International Association of Tour Managers, "tour guides act as buffers among tourists and the social environment, handling problems because they act as intermediaries between tourists and the unknown environment (Pearce, 1982; Schmidt, 1979)", (as cited in Zhang & Chow, 2004, p.4). Based on the field trip experiences in this study, the guide was the unification of several roles. First, the Sky High Wilderness Ranch guide educated and narrated local stories, history and culture related to dog sledding. Secondly, during a field school trip seminar, one tourism operator claimed that their guides are often regarded as cultural interpreters or cultural brokers and an intermediary for the visitors and local hosts. During a tour of the art gallery, the field trip leader introduced the cultural development and recent art activities in Whitehorse. Additionally, the museum instructor provided full information about the history of the location and natural heritage during a museum tour.

In another example, I recorded impressions on the role of the guide Lindsey during the educational tour of the Yukon Wildlife Reserve:

Our guide told us the progress of protecting those animals these years, which impressed me and I am being awakened to my love for nature...The only way to describe the feeling of getting close to wildlife was exhilaration and feeling full of awe (Zhang, Field Notes, March 2, 2018).

The tour guide was more than an information giver; her emotional and enthusiastic explanation aroused feelings of respect and love for wild animals.

The tour guide can also be a tour designer. Anne Middler, the owner and guide for Kicksled Revolution, not only introduced kicksledding techniques to all participants but also made a plan B to cope with weather changes.

In addition, some acts of the tour guide can warm the tour group up and lift visitors' moods. When the visitor is a stranger to the destination being visited, the sights can be interpreted through the tour guide's commentary. In this study, the field school trip leader, who was also a local tour guide, acted as an ambassador extending hospitality and presented Whitehorse in a way that made visitors want to return.

4.2.1.3.2 *Winter adventure activities and cultural products.*

Apart from the role of indispensable tour guide, some tangible winter tourism activities impressed me a lot. Below is what I experienced and recorded in my journal on our first day in Whitehorse:

We watched the last little bit of the Rendezvous Festival. I knew this festival as its logo can always be found in tourism brochures and leaflets. In the festival area, all the booths were simply assembled with old materials: like rusty iron, faded posters, wood, porcelain pieces and canvas. Later, I made and tasted maple syrup on snow. My Canadian friends told me that, when they were little, they really looked forward to eating it in winter. Sweets also reminded me of my childhood fascination with taffy...I posted sweets on my Sina Microblog, the Chinese Twitter, and reminisced about the joys of childhood (Zhang, Field Notes, February 25, 2018).

The vintage and nostalgic atmosphere in the Yukon is also an important feature in tourism advertising in international brochures. Doing the cancan in the parade and tasting taffy in the snow made the researcher feel both exotic and familiar because the taffy tasted identical and reminiscent of childhood and because the dance displayed the charm of old Shanghai in the 1930s.

Various unique winter adventure activities featured prominently in the Yukon experience of this research. Not surprisingly, qualities of pleasure, exhilaration, breath-taking experiences and contentment emerged strongly. Taking the dogsledding tour as an example, I noted:

When I arrived, the barking shocked me. I cannot understand their language so I was not sure if they were excited or they had some other stories to tell. The incessant barking of

these dozens of dogs frightened me. The sound was the most powerful [thing] I have ever heard (Zhang, Field Notes, February 28, 2018).

With the musher, the dog team ran through the incredible scenery of Whitehorse. The excited barks and howls of the dogs echoed across the serene mountain valleys. I gained some techniques and learned a lot, including the history and subtleties of dogsledding. The service was intimate and attentive as the tour operator provided warm clothing, boots and gloves to ward off the cold.

Other exhilarating winter activities were jogging along the Yukon river and the kicksledding tour. As I recorded in the journal:

Kicksledding is about the most fun that anyone of any age can have in the snow. It does not take a long time before I felt like a native because it is easy to master. Participants were all sweaty and so enjoyed [it] (Zhang, Field Notes, February 28, 2018).

A great way to experience the view of the riverside is to kicksled through the middle of the trees along the narrow path. The high kicking technique is also a way to exercise.

Local culture also builds tourism products and cultural services. A cultural product reflects the cultural productive force, aesthetic taste, custom and habit. For instance, Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre supports Indigenous art and provides an opportunity for the public to engage with First Nation artists. After being immersed in the local culture for eleven days, I had a sense of the Indigenous people of the region and wrote:

I started to appreciate the strong physical features of the northern Indigenous nations and aesthetically enjoyed the bird or eagle patterns on the totem pole (Zhang, Field Notes, March 6, 2018).

The Indigenous crafts had high aesthetic value, like a variety of painted totem, masks, and headdresses. Yukon First Nations 101 (<https://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/programs/courses/yfn-001>) provided a broader understanding and information about Yukon First Nations. Large murals and some artworks of totem poles with the crow or raven represented their cultural ceremonial

and artistic life. traditional Indigenous artistic abilities were embodied everywhere. The online course taught that oral traditions and historical timelines documented the ways of Indigenous ancestors there. The Council of Yukon First Nations serves to protect First Nations' rights and interests, including working for land claims settlement. Yukon First Nations have a profound understanding of the land and possess a strong spirituality based on respect for the land. For me, experiencing the First Nation culture was moving and memorable, which further enforced the connection to the land. Connecting with nature is such an important aspect that is missing in modern life. As for me, who grew up in a city during decades of industrial take-off, it is hard to say that I have a deep affinity with nature. However, I was beginning to understand many artists have drawn their inspiration from nature, as well as I started to enjoy the beauties of nature.

Artistic ability and the visitor experience are also present in the impressive opportunities available from Lumel Studio, a glass blowing facility in Whitehorse. Lumel offered a wide range of workshops, including walk-ins and team building events. Lumel Studio gifts bring benefit to visitors and the community itself. After visiting the studio and website, I noted:

The studio provides workshops and opens up the studio for anyone, including the “River Walkers”, disenfranchised youth and elderly community members, to come in and be involved in creating many beautiful pieces (Zhang, Field Notes, March 1, 2018).

The work that Lumel does to help the community was incredibly admirable, open and community-minded. It mobilized community members and used group purchasing as a way to attract clients. In this way, residents were motivated to participate in community implementation and visitors benefited from the development. Thus, by providing community development from a fresh innovative perspective, tourism development becomes more responsive to beneficiaries' needs.

4.2.2 Experiential features from winter tourism website content analysis.

Winter tourism experiential features, designed for Chinese visitors, were identified through using text and visual data from sixteen tourism websites (see Appendix D). The personal realm feeds

into experiential outcomes by working with influential elements (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). Thus, experiential features, belonging to both influential realms and personal realms, were explored and identified as the contributing content. The findings of the experiential features presented on tourism websites are summarized in Figure 10.

Experiential Features					
Influential Realm	Physical aspects	1. Natural landscapes (snow, mountains, northern lights)	Natural, breath-taking, pure, beautiful, unpolluted, quiet, tranquil, harmonious, romantic, peaceful, spectacular, auspicious, mysterious.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic feeling Folk legend Color perception 	Personal Realm (including knowledge, memory, perception, emotion and self-identity)
		2. Wilderness	Excitement, enjoyment, released, freedom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall impression Previous visitors' perception 	
		3. Unique wildlife	Unique, exhilaration, educational.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge presented Approval from others 	
	Social aspects	1. Interaction with local people and community	Sharing, friendly, educational, desirable, delighted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning historical knowledge A sense of participation Imagination and association 	
		2. Interaction with indigenous people	Easy-going, friendly, honest, skilled at singing and dancing, faith-filled, exotic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curiosity Mystery Respect for faiths and customs 	
		3. Interaction with other tourists	Sharing, relaxation, enjoyment, passionate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authenticity Emotional resonance Emotional contagion 	
	Product/Services	1. Accommodation and interior design	Warm and cozy, a sense of home, comfortable, access-friendly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiarity Transition of cultural shocks 	
		2. Tour guide services	Indispensable, skilled gained, relieved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Learning skills Emotional dependence 	
		3. Providing translation and environmental protection information	Read-friendly, consumer-friendly, convenient, educational.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barrier-free transmission of information Learning knowledge Self-examination 	
		4. Products segments	Fulfillment, satisfaction, achievement, people-oriented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval from others A sense of participation Learning skills 	
5. Shopping services		Convenient, lack of information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expected shopping demands 		
6. Local foods		Unique, novel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Novelty 		
7. Winter outdoor activities		Various, extraordinary, unforgettable, once-in-a-lifetime, unique, joy, fear, excitement, exhilaration, educational.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Novelty Emotional resonance Authenticity Learning skills 		

Figure 10. A summary of experiential features from tourism website content analysis.

Figure 10 summarizes the experiential features found from sixteen tourism websites. By analyzing the website text and images, three influential aspects were found to influence place-based experiential features: natural landscapes, social interactions and tourism-related products and services. The five elements within the personal realm also were found to influence the tourism experience, as experiential features encompassed understanding of tourism experience information and destination image aimed at Chinese visitors. Within the constructivist paradigm, some reflections of website content were not shown in the findings here, whereas online comments and feedback from visitors reflected their own tourist experiences. For instance, the experience of warm and cozy local accommodation shaped Chinese visitors' view of winter tours through familiar interior decorations and friendly communications. Also, having understanding,

knowledge and information of the natural landscape contributed to an extraordinary tourism experience, for instance, the legend of northern lights adds an auspicious, mysterious and romantic atmosphere.

Data from Yukon tourism websites were detailed in the original data document (see Website information analysis_ Data File). The multi-thematic and composite content of the experiential features has some overlaps between the findings from the analysis of the field school journal and the content from tourism websites. Section 4.2.2.1 details the findings of the physical environment and geographic features. Section 4.2.2.2 focuses on experiential features influenced by social interactions (interactions with local people and the community, Indigenous people and other visitors). Section 4.2.2.3 introduces the findings of the experiential features related to winter tourism products and intangible services.

4.2.2.1 Features of physical aspects on websites.

The findings related to the physical aspects detail that nature in Yukon Territory was seen as an essential element in website content. On all sixteen websites, the physical environment was presented in the text and images (see Appendix D for a summary of physical experiential features). The majority of the images on the sixteen websites depicted natural landscape features, such as snow and northern lights (see Appendix E for a summary of landscape features). Natural landscapes, wilderness and unique wildlife were three main experiential features.

Analysis of the first of the three main physical features, the natural landscape, resulted in the finding that the classic natural landscape of Yukon consisted of snow, mountains and northern lights on website pages. All websites connected Yukon with a natural landscape of mountains, snow and northern lights, shown through text, images and videos, and was a common focus for tours geared to Chinese travellers. Mountain views with snow were mentioned on all sixteen tourism websites. For example, the 318 Arctic Colour website described “Snow-capped mountains back the city” and “Beautiful Whitehorse looks like a fairy-tale faraway place ringed by snow-capped peaks” (inserted content from the website’s same page in its English language

version) (<http://www.318arcticcolourtours.com>). The text descriptive of mountains and snowy landscapes used adjectives like “pure”, “beautiful”, “natural”, “breath-taking”, “unpolluted” and “quiet”. Website descriptions of winter tours included a tranquil landscape attached to a quiet natural environment. The Arctic Range Adventure (<https://www.arcticrange.com/cn>) website stated:

There is a cozy log cabin covered by snow which might help office workers stay away from the troubles of modern society (author’s translation).

In the snow, every sound seems muffled and, thus, the deep quiet of snow evokes the tranquil. The winter tour with snow appeals to the excitement in visitors’ hearts. This kind of aesthetic, along with feeling harmonious with nature, can arouse the urgent desire for nature, quiet and simple regression.

Analysis of website images, based on the physical aspect content, showed that all websites used snow images to illustrate the winter landscape in Yukon and the most eye-catching winter-related photos always showed the ground covered with snow. The Arctic Range Adventure webpages contained images of a snow land with overlapping shadows under the sun. Snow-related photos presented as “peaceful” and “romantic”.

Along with mountains and snow, northern lights can indeed be called spectacular. The northern lights were often cited for their descriptive representation of features associated with original nature, which designed as the top one Yukon winter tour package in fourteen websites (except Yukon Wide Adventures (<http://yukonwide.com/en/yukon-winter-tours>) and 穷游, called “Qyer” in English (<https://place.qyer.com/yukon-territory>)). The aurora borealis tour (or northern lights tour) is a spectacular way to experience the vast expanse and beauty of the great wide north. All websites mentioned that the “Aurora tour” is an indispensable part of a holiday in Yukon and one of the most memorable experiences in the north. The China International Travel Service Dalian Branch website [CITS] (<http://www.citsdlgh.com/dujia11840>) advised that the aurora borealis can provide extra benefits to couples wishing to have children, stating:

Lovers who see the northern lights will be blessed by heaven. And if you want to get pregnant, if you see the aurora, you can get pregnant as you wish (author's translation).

Tour companies presented the aurora borealis as brilliantly mysterious and regarded as a symbol of jubilation and as auspicious. They also claimed that one of the best reasons to visit Yukon in the winter is to catch the beautiful northern lights.

The images also reinforced the textual content regarding the northern lights, illustrating that the aurora borealis is one of the typical natural features in Yukon. There were two websites that displayed winter-related photos depicting only the aurora borealis (Rocky Mountain Scenic Tours {<http://www.amazingtravel.ca/tour/tourDetail/1/2/21>} and Arctic Range Adventure). All aurora borealis images presented on website pages showed a view of the northern lights dancing in waves of green across an inky sky and bright colors in the dark, as the light from the aurora borealis paints the night emerald green. Fourteen of the sixteen websites showed images of the northern lights falling and dancing with a pair of seats outside a wall tent. Eleven of the sixteen websites displayed the aurora borealis on their front page. Two of these eleven websites used aurora viewing as their homepage background (see more details in Appendix E).

The second feature of the three main physical findings is wilderness. Eight websites referred to the Yukon as “The City of Wilderness” on their homepages and all websites mentioned the wilderness. Tours in Yukon Territory are described as “experiencing the real original wilderness of Canada” (author's translation) by Top Top International Tour [TTIT] (<http://www.ttit.ca>). The Yukon Government's Travel Yukon website (<http://www.travel Yukon.cn>) defined Yukon's physical features by four tags lines which appeared on their homepage: “the city of wilderness”, “the dance of angels”, “nimble nature” and “the ends of the earth”. These four tags represent Yukon Territory's undisturbed wild natural environment, the view of northern lights, unique wildlife and its remote geographic location. Two of them refer to the wilderness. Travel Yukon's website also described that:

In the Yukon, you can immerse yourself in the vast wilderness...Excitement and pleasure are from endless wilderness and untouched nature of the Yukon Territory (author's translation).

The wilderness can bring up a sense of excitement and enjoyment. 318 Arctic Colour's website stated, "Looking out into the fabulous nature helps relax your mind and soul" (author's translation). This explanation reveals one can experience freedom and feelings of release from being in the wilderness.

Thirdly, unique wildlife in Yukon Territory was a key element on the analyzed website pages. Twelve websites provided an interpretive tour of the Yukon Wildlife Preserve as a component of their winter tour packages showing wood bison, lynx, arctic foxes, woodland caribou, thornhorn sheep, mountain goats and more. Travel Yukon posted photos of elk herds, swans, lynx, Dall's sheep and sledding dogs in the snow on their winter website page. The text and photos described encounters with unique wildlife as unexpected and exhilarating. Similarly, as Qyer's website described, "This preserve is a favorite place for photographers and animal lovers. It is a unique attraction to watch wild animals for the four seasons and to have intimate contact with wildlife." The Charming Holidays website (<http://vancouver-charmingholidays.com/mobile.html>) referred to the Yukon Wildlife Preserve as the "animal game farm", stating:

In the educational farm, you can experience over 12 iconic Yukon species in large natural habitats and learn more about Yukon wildlife (author's translation).

These descriptions showed how wild animals perform as one of the winter tourism experiential features and are promoted as an educational component of the tour for winter visitors.

4.2.2.2 Features of social aspects on websites.

As mentioned, social interactions influence tourism experiential features. This section is organized in three parts: 1) interaction with local people and the community; 2) interaction with Indigenous people; and, 3) interaction with other tourists. First, historical knowledge can be

learned during personal interactions. For instance, As the Ctrip website, or 携程旅行网, wrote, “The host of this local Airbnb room told guests his family history, which dates back to the 1960s” (author’s translation) (<https://you.ctrip.com/place/yukonterritory21575.html>). The regional history was learned by communicating with locals on-site. Prior to visiting Yukon, tourists combined their previous educational experiences to create a certain emotional connection to the local history by using imagination and association and by forming an imagined image of the destination to generate the desire to travel to Yukon.

Similarly, many photos as feedback were also displayed on the website pages. They illustrated Chinese visitors having a good time with local people. The MaFengWo website, or 马蜂窝, posted photos, in combination with text, to show visitors enjoying time spent with local people. For instance, one photo showed a little Chinese girl eating toasted marshmallows with a local snowmobile instructor and another showed a group of Chinese visitors eating and raising their glasses with a local family in their home (<http://www.mafengwo.cn/travel-scenic-spot/mafengwo/65858.html>).

The second interaction analyzed for social features were interactions with Indigenous people and the community. All websites introduced Indigenous people as skilled singers and dancers who enjoy outdoor activities and have a close relationship with animals. Twelve of the sixteen websites offered the opportunity to experience the Indigenous lifestyle during sightseeing tours. The tours included a program where visitors are led through the living quarters and traditional home of Indigenous people in Yukon. The Charming Holidays website provided “a site visit” to Indigenous settlements when tourists participated in the aurora borealis tour’s second-day activities. The 318 Arctic Colour website designed “the Indigenous living place visit” as a third-day activity, describing:

There are many Indigenous people living in Yukon. Today we can have an in-depth understanding of the Indigenous people’s living style. The exotic cultural tour is super popular among tourists. While learning about the culture, visitors can also appreciate the beauty of Aboriginal life art (author’s translation).

Indigenous people are described as exotic and found to be friendly, honest, easy going and faithful. In the Yukon, the experience of contact with Indigenous people is deemed exotic with the presence of a number of factors in association with a unique experience, such as the ambience, surrounding environment, traditional clothing, regional culture and regional cuisine. “Exotic” is a description which denotes curiosity about nostalgia, uniqueness and novelty being experienced. As the website, CITS (<http://www.citsdlgh.com/dujia11840>) stated:

This trip allows you to get in touch with Indigenous people. Indigenous people tell you about the history of Indigenous people, life, hunting, folk culture, and the production of traditional herbs. In the evening, you can taste the Indigenous feast, enjoy the bonfire party, and learn about their beliefs and spiritual rituals (author’s translation).

Every visitor was invited to be a part of the celebration or the bonfire party, and visitors participated in traditions and culture hosted by the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations people.

The third aspect analyzed for social features was interaction with other tourists or local people. The AOA website characterized the Chinese visitor who chose Yukon as their travel destination as “the loner”. However, “sharing” was an important experiential feature during activities, such as visiting hot springs, bonfires and aurora viewing. As the Cantrip website (<http://can-trip.com/加拿大育空北极光探奇之旅/>) described:

Relax in the evenings with a shower, sauna or snuggled up by the fire recounting your day’s adventure with others on your tour (author’s translation).

Chatting also reduced fatigue and stress and provided relaxation. The MaFengWo website wrote:

A cozy, heated cabin for wall tent with hot drinks and snacks for you and your friends makes the Aurora viewing even more enjoyable (author’s translation).

Similarly, the website of Charming Holidays mentioned sharing and said:

In a warm-up cabin, hot drinks and snacks are provided. You may sit around a roaring fire and share stories (author's translation).

Furthermore, Furthermore, social interaction can happen between previous visitors and potential visitors. The Ctrip website claimed that a tourist travelled to Yukon because of a popular novel, *Don't Go Will Die* (不去会死 or Bùqùhuìsǐ), about cycling around the world and another tourist travelled to Yukon because another traveller's journals appealed to his desire to 'find emotional resonance'.

The visual data online also underscored tourists' strong emotions, illustrated through videos uploaded on some well-established websites. These materials also presented the in-the-moment and dynamic point of view for viewers. For instance, the 318 Arctic Colour website contained uploaded videos of passionate visitors who drove across the Arctic region, claiming, "It was a dangerous trip", and viewers could sense the thrill and passion, for instance, with a motorcade spiraling up and down the mountain, even from the screen.

In addition, images, related to social interaction, illustrated the interaction with others and extended interpersonal relations. On the Yukon Wide Adventures website, the winter photos demonstrated a spirit of goodwill surrounding the tourists. Given that eight photos had duplicate content, all 44 of 52 winter-related images were group photos with two or more people laughing. There were more landscape photos than portraits, but the group photos, which were much more than single portraits, showed bright smiles on visitors' faces.

4.2.2.3 Features of products/services on websites.

According to the analytical framework, experiential features were influenced by tourism products and intangible services. At the activity sites, the winter tourism design features, in terms of efficiency and user experience, formed the basis of a high-quality experience. In Section 4.2.2.3, there were three main experiential features of tourism products and services: access-friendly, people-oriented and extraordinary, and included seven detailed experiential features. As for transportation, although all operators provided airport transfers, the public transportation

system of Yukon presented no online information. Thus, there was no written content for the public transportation system.

In the following section, the findings of the seven experiential features as related to tourism products and services, are summarized. The first section explained indispensable tour guide service and consumer-friendly translation. The second section presents people-oriented design, like warm and cozy designs, segments of products, information providing services and unique local food. Lastly, the seventh feature relates to extraordinary winter activities (see Appendix F)

4.2.2.3.1 Indispensable tour guide service and translation service.

Firstly, all websites shared the position that experiencing wilderness in the winter required a tour guide. Sixteen websites emphasized the importance of the company of not only friends and family, but also a tour guide. The Arctic Range Adventures website even used the terms, “frightening” and “thrilling”, to describe their wilderness trips. Having a guide let tourists feel at ease. The 318 Arctic Colour website also said that:

Your guide is connected with you by two-way radio. He is watching you across the lake. Just use the radio and your guide will be there with you in a very short time (author’s translation).

The tour guide was seen as a security guard in this case. On the winter homepage of the Yukon Home and Tour website, a skiing photo showed tour guides or ski instructors explaining the ski instructors giving instruction and checking boots (<http://yukonhomeandtour.com/ch/>). Cantrip wrote:

Please be assured that we will have two experienced guides to accompany you in order to better experience an ice-cold adventure (author’s translation).

The websites’ descriptions claimed that visitors feel “relieved” when they are accompanied by tour guides. A tour guide was seen as not only a person who takes people on sightseeing tours but also as the information-giver, the teacher and the caretaker.

Along with providing protection and companionship, the tour guide was also seen as a translator. As stated on the homepage of the Yukon Home and Tour website, “We are proud to have multilingual services, including English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Taiwanese and even French and German” (author’s translation).

Secondly, translation services are necessary and “friendly”, influencing international visitors’ travelling experience. Ten of the sixteen tourism websites provided a “read-friendly” translation service, designed to appeal to Chinese visitors. The websites, Rocky Mountain Scenic Tours, RRUU, Keep Exploring Canada and AOA did not post the translation service on their pages but instead, were all in Chinese. Only Yukon Wide Adventures and Charming Holidays websites did not have a Chinese translation tour service, but claimed, “English speaking tour guides are available all the time” (author’s translation).

4.2.2.3.2 *Consumer-friendly service.*

Thirdly, descriptions of accommodations online often included the term, “warm”, and the phrase, “a sense of home”. Living with local people is a good way to experience the local lifestyle and their enthusiasm. In writing about accommodations, an online article, *Pursuing the most beautiful northern lights in Whitehorse, the capital of the Yukon Territory, Canada*, mentioned “warm and cozy” (温馨 or wēnxīn) and “comfortable” five times in one paragraph. It said, “I was living in Beez Kneez Hostel, unlike a luxury hotel. I felt quite at home, so warm, sweet and cozy. I definitely recommend you come and experience the warm and friendly” (author’s translation). Tourist infrastructure and general infrastructure on the website pages tended to show a sense of home. As Ctrip wrote, “This local Airbnb room in Whitehorse provides an experience of warmth and simplicity” (author’s translation).

Except for hotels or Airbnb’s, a “warm” experience was also related to decorations and setting for aurora viewing. Fourteen of sixteen tourism websites mentioned that wood, stoves, hot drinks and sofa seats are available in each canvas wall tent. These key words, representing

warmth and comfort, always appeared in describing ideal locations, heating systems, big bedrooms, fully equipped kitchens, hot drinks and free internet.

Fourthly, “fulfillment and satisfaction” are from the travelling product segment. For instance, the descriptions of the musher certificate and the certificate given for travelling to the Arctic Circle reflect that learning new things and reaching a milestone can be seen as a reflection or result of tourism experiences. Also, all websites had a section that introduced the historical background of the Yukon area to increase visitors’ understanding of the area and to deepen their impression of Yukon. The information included geography, history, language and culture. Other educational material included introducing the concept, “the love of the land”, which referred to environmental protection information and encouraging self-examination. The 318 Arctic Colour website described the dogsledding experience in an environment-friendly, reminding tourists to take away garbage.

As for the satisfaction of tour package design, all tour packages online were created and sorted by the different types of activities and amount of travel time and were similar to each other. There was no special tour package or service designed for a certain group of people. However, some services and limitations identified children under 12 years of age. As examples, the CITS-Dalian Branch website stated, “We give 10 percent discount of the application fee for children under 12 years old” (author’s translation); the Charming Holidays website said, “Snowmobile driving tour has an age limit. Only allows tourists over 12 (author’s translation); the Yukon Home Tour website stated, “Children from 2 to 12 are not suggested to participate in the dogsledding” (author’s translation); and, lastly, the Yukon Wide Adventures website said, “The convenience kits for one camping package, including cups and bowls and kinds of household necessities, is free for children under 12 years old” (author’s translation).

A tourism website is an important source of information and consideration of the needs of children on the website can provide tourists who are parents with reassurance in making their

travel decisions. Tourists who plan to travel with children can gain more information and be prepared well in advance.

Fifthly, potential consumers found information related to shopping “convenient” and “friendly”. Five websites mentioned a free activity and ease of shopping in town; nine websites highlighted that the GST tax was 5%. However, there was not specific shopping information on the websites and no reference to handmade souvenirs, specialty stores or gift centers.

The sixth experiential feature was tasting “unique” local foods and learning about the ingredients and culinary traditions. Eight websites provided hot drinks and snacks and the Yukon Home and Tour website mentioned toasted marshmallows. The 318 Arctic Colour website listed their dinner menu that included, “moose sausage, smoked wild salmon, grilled wild beef, grilled elk meat, wild arctic squid, baked potato, salad and dessert” (author’s translation).

4.2.2.3.3 *Extraordinary winter activities.*

The last experiential feature, the “extraordinary” experience, apart from the above intangible services, was mostly related to tangible winter activities. All websites similarly sorted various winter activities into aurora viewing, wildlife viewing, dogsledding, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, ice fishing, city tours and hot springs tours. Yukon tourism operators have developed marketing links with various tourism products in the region. These tourism products were described as unforgettable activities that contained the following five main items: “once-in-a-lifetime experience”, “unique”, “different from previous experience”, “fulfill the dream” and “experienced something new”. For wilderness trips, the Ctrip website mentioned the feeling of “fear”, but all of the other sixteen websites identified the winter wilderness experience largely as “joy”, “contentment”, “exciting” and “exhilaration”.

4.2.3 Conclusion of Yukon winter tourism experiential features.

Section 4.2 highlighted Yukon winter tourism experiential features as observed from the research conducted during the 2018 Yukon Winter Tourism Field School. Then, findings from sixteen tourism websites identified a large number of experiential features promoted to Chinese visitors.

Within these findings, the three themes, nature, unique and people-oriented, emerged. Experiencing “nature” included experiencing snow, mountains, northern lights, wilderness, wildlife and nature-based tourism activities. “Nature” brought “extraordinary” experiences, described as awe, breath-taking, unrestrained, freedom, spectacular, pure, tranquil, once-in-a-lifetime, auspicious, romantic, excitement, exhilaration, adventurous, passionate, thrill, joy, enjoyment, contentment and satisfied. The second feature theme was “unique” cultural experience. It refers to Indigenous and local cultural interactions which make visitors feel exotic, novel, faithful, aesthetical diversity, nostalgic and friendly. “Unique” included experiencing “educational” Yukon winter activities. The educational experience included learning historical and natural knowledge, gaining skills, learning about environmental protection, reaching a personal milestone and finding emotional resonances. The third theme of experiential features was “people-oriented”, including not only tangible settings but also intangible services, which gave the impression of a consumer-friendly and access-friendly experience.

4.3 Experiential Features and Sustainable Arctic Tourism

Section 4.3 addresses the second research question: *what is the relationship between the experiential features promoted to Chinese winter tourism visitors to Yukon and sustainable tourism development?* Sustainable tourism seeks to minimize negative impacts on the local culture and natural environment while generating benefits for economic development, community well-being and visitor satisfaction (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005; WTO, 2018). Indicators of the Arctic sustainable tourism development (ASTD) analytical framework (see Section 3.6.2) were used to glean insights that helped advance the understanding of the relationship between tourism experiences and sustainable tourism in the Arctic. This section employs indicators identified in the SATD analytical framework. The experiential features were categorized and matched with economic, social-cultural and environmental factors. The relationship between the experiential features and sustainable tourism development can be

illustrated in four aspects: the positive relationship, the negative relationship, no function relationship and the inclusion relationship, which are described in Table 5 below.

The function of the relationship between experiential features and ASTD indicators describes the relationship as either positive, negative or as having no relationship between them. This relationship identification illustrated and enriched the understanding that experiential features can contribute to Arctic sustainable tourism development as a ‘catalyst’ and indicator of the need for the ‘lubricant’. Specifically, some experiential features, which positively enabled sustainable tourism development, were seen as a catalyst, being the positive reinforcement for the sustainable tourism experience, while other experiential features uncovered places where Arctic sustainable tourism experienced obstacles and acted as a lubricant. Here, lubricant refers to certain management strategies, acting as a buffer against problems or threats to Arctic sustainable tourism development. The ideal state of the relationship between experiential features and sustainable tourism development is where all features of the tourism experience overlapped with sustainability, is theoretically attractive; however, this may be challenging to achieve given the tourism realities in the Northern region. In describing the “class inclusion” relationship, the feature is a member of the class of the indicator or, in other words, the feature is an instance of the indicator, meaning experiential features belong to ASTD indicators and not vice versa. Thus, experiential features were necessary but not sufficient for developing Arctic sustainable tourism.

Table 5. A summary of the relationship between experiential features and Arctic sustainable tourism development (ASTD) indicators.

YUKON WINTER TOURISM EXPERIENCE TO CHINESE VISITORS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The Relationship between Arctic Sustainable Tourism Development Indicators and Experiential Features					
Segment	Indicator	Theme	Features that are included	Relationship Class Inclusion	
Socio-Economic Development					
Level of Local Support	The government	People-oriented	Rich, effective information. Access-friendly.	+	√
	The local community	Educational	Sharing. Learning knowledge. Spiritual fulfillment. Emotional resonance. Enlightening. Respect. Equality. Skills gained. Meaningful.	+	√
		Unique	Exotic. Faith-filled. Aesthetically pleasing. Nostalgic. Friendly interaction.	+	
		People-oriented	Convenient. Warm and cozy. A sense of home. Consumer-friendly. Rich effective information. Access-friendly. Effective site interpretation.	+	√
Marketing Conditions	Tourist market development	Nature	Wilderness. Unpolluted, Unspoiled. Natural. Awe.	-	
		Unique	Novel. Exotic. Aesthetically pleasing.	+	√
		Extraordinary	Once-in-a-lifetime. Excitement, exhilaration. Adventurous. Passionate. Thrill.	+	√
	The ability of access	Extraordinary	Joy. Contentment. Satisfied.	+	
		People-oriented	Access-friendly. Effective translation. Consumer-friendly. Rich effective information.	+	√
Destination Management	Continuous monitoring of performances	Nature	Wildlife. Ecological, Unpolluted. Natural. Tranquil.	+	
		Educational	Learning knowledge and skills. Love of the land.	+	√
		People-oriented	Consumer-friendly. Convenient. Rich effective information.	+	√
	Local career opportunities	Educational	Sharing. Learning knowledge. Enlightening.	+	√
		Unique	Exotic, Novel. Friendly interaction. Aesthetically pleasing.	+	
		People-oriented	Effective site interpretation. A sense of home. Security. Effective translation.	+	√
Cultural Development					
Preservation & Innovation	Indigenous culture & Cultural heritage	Educational	Learning knowledge. Spiritual fulfillment. Enlightening.	+	√
		Unique	Exotic. Faith-filled. Aesthetically pleasing.	+	√
		Extraordinary	Enjoyment. Joy.	+	√
		People-oriented	Access-friendly. Rich effective information.	-	
				+	√
	Cultural interaction	Educational	Learning knowledge. Emotional resonance. Enlightening.	+	√
		Unique	Aesthetically pleasing. Friendly. Exotic. Faithful.	+	√
				-	

YUKON WINTER TOURISM EXPERIENCE TO CHINESE VISITORS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Segment	Indicator	Theme	Features that are included	Relationship	Class Inclusion
Cultural Resource Utilization				0	
Coordination of Residents	Residents' satisfaction			0	
	Locals' participation	Unique	Exotic. Aesthetically pleasing. Friendly.	+	√
Educational		Meaningful. Love of the land.	+	√	
Environmental Sustainability					
Basic Energy and water supply		People-oriented	Convenient. Consumer-friendly. Access-friendly. A sense of home. Warm.	+	√
Land available for exploitation				0	
Environmental Quality	Landscape quality	Nature	Mountains. Unpolluted. Unspoiled. Natural. Original.	+	√
		Extraordinary	Awe. Breath-taking. Spectacular. Pure.	+	
	Atmosphere quality	Nature	Snow. Aurora. Unpolluted. Unspoiled. Natural.	+	√
		Extraordinary	Awe. Breath-taking. Spectacular. Pure.	+	
	Water quality			0	
Light & noise pollution	Extraordinary	Spectacular. Peace. Tranquil. Serenity. Auspicious. Original. Once-in-a-lifetime.	-		
Wildlife Protection		Nature	Unique wildlife. Enjoyment.	+	√
Seasonality management		People-oriented	Rich, effective information.	+	√
Adaptation of climate change				0	
Educating the Public		Educational	Learning knowledge. Love of the land. Meaningful. Sustainable garbage disposal behavior.	+	√
Greenhouse gas emissions				0	
<i>Note.</i> ^a “+” means a positive relationship. ^b “-” means a negative relationship. ^c “0” means no function relationship. ^d “√” refers to the feature belongs to the indicator.					

The findings of the relationships between experiential features and ASTD indicators, as shown in Table 5, are (a) the function of the relationship (positive, negative or no function); and, (b) the inclusion relationship. The positive relationship and the inclusion relationship are summarized and organized together as these features and indicators mostly overlapped. There are four specific sections below that describe the components of the ASTD framework.

4.3.1 The positive relationship and the inclusion relation.

The first segment of findings of the relationship between experiential features and ASTD indicators is the positive relationship and the inclusion relationship. Based on segments of the ASTD framework, there are four specific sections as below.

4.3.1.1 Socio-economic development.

The indicator, which measured the level of support of local government and community, was positively reflected within people-oriented settings, including effective tourism information and friendly accessibility. Local community support also had a positive influence on educating tourists and providing a unique cultural experience. Moreover, various people-oriented tourism services and educational opportunities offered by the authorities belonged to the supportive practice conduct.

4.3.1.2 Destination marketing.

Many specific experiential features with strong emotion-related themes, such as ‘unique’ or ‘people-oriented’, played a positive role in advancing destination marketing development. Features of positive emotions, such as joy and contentment, were felt when helpful translation services and rich, useful information were offered and contributed a positive relationship with ‘the ability of access’ indicator. Pertaining to destination management, there were three themes of experiential features identified that had a positive relationship to the continuous monitoring of performance indicators and local career opportunity indicators respectively. The three themes are natural experience, unique cultural and educational gains and people-oriented settings. In summary, creating the opportunity to get close to nature and experience the extraordinary

required more access-friendly design and effective monitoring, which depended on local authorities and community support. Also, the educational meaning and intangible services were most represented by tour guide services and information and communication efficiency. The quality of translation and information transmission relied on local support and applied people cultivation.

4.3.1.3 Cultural development.

Experiential features and most cultural development indicators had a positive relationship. Every positive relationship, referred to as an inclusion indicator set, consisted of some related experiential features. Improved protection and interaction with Indigenous or the local culture and people promoted an exotic culture and aesthetic diversity, as well as delivered unique educational experiences, including learning knowledge, gaining spiritual fulfillment, being educated and finding emotional resonances. Similarly, the participation of locals in tourism activities, who demonstrated their love of the land, contributed to an exotic, friendly and meaningful experience.

4.3.1.4 Environmental development.

Winter tourism in Yukon that is nature-based relies on environmental quality. For example, the effect of tourist experiences of snow, mountains, wildlife and northern lights was positively associated with environmental quality and wildlife protection. The availability of water and energy was the basis for what constituted a ‘people-oriented’ service. In addition, by providing rich, effective information, risks, related to extreme weather, were able to be addressed. Lastly, promoting knowledge about environmental protection provided visitors with a meaningful tourism experience and was positively related to the indicator, ‘educating the public’.

The accurate understanding of the positive relationship and the inclusion relationship of experiential features contributes to sustainable tourism development. Broadly speaking, this study contributes to a better understanding of the role of experiential features and is a useful tool

for advancing the goals of sustainable tourism. Thus, the experiential features framework is presented as a catalyst tool to improve sustainable tourism development.

4.3.2 The negative relationship and no relationship.

The second function of the relationship between experiential features and ASTD indicators is the negative relationship. 'Nature' is the theme representing original scenery (nature in its original and untouched state), unique natural landscapes and environmental quality. The negative relationship between original nature and tourism development is represented by the two contradictory features of the territory's wilderness and its accessibility. Many nature-based activities rely on sensitive and vulnerable environments and winter activity development puts stress on these delicate environments. Moreover, there is a negative relationship between the tourism experience and over-development as it relates to Indigenous cultural heritage protection.

To broadly adopt sustainable tourism in the Arctic, indicators had a number of specific spheres. That means there were some ASTD indicators where no relationship with any experiential feature was found. For example, no experiential feature correlated to the cultural resource utilization segment. This was also the case with the resident's satisfaction indicator. Also, there were some environmental indicators that had no experiential features associated with the scale of land available for exploitation, the quality of water resource, adaptation of climate change and the treatment of greenhouse gas emissions. No experiential features were found to reflect these ASTD indicators, implying that the current tourism experience is not a complete picture of sustainable tourism.

Overall, sustainable tourism development indicators neatly intersected with experiential features explored and, at other times, did not, suggesting that the lens of sustainable tourism development is not always in perfect alignment with experiential features. Because the experiential features outlined above were necessary but insufficient for sustainability, tourism experience aspects often intersected with sustainable tourism, yet conceptually were separate from sustainable tourism.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of this research is to understand the experiential features aimed at Chinese winter visitors to Yukon and the relationship these experiences have to sustainable tourism development. Two questions were used to advance this understanding: 1) *what are the experiential features of winter tourism and how are they promoted to Yukon's Chinese visitor market?*; and, 2) *what is the relationship between the experiential features promoted to Chinese winter tourism visitors to Yukon and sustainable tourism development?* Through answering these research questions, the experiential features of winter tourism, which were promoted to Chinese visitors, were identified. By examining the relationship between the Yukon winter tourism experience and sustainable tourism, understanding of sustainable tourism development in the Arctic would be advanced.

An examination of the nature of the experiential features and the correspondence between the tourism experience and sustainable tourism development is discussed in the following sections. In Section 5.1, insights from the literature related to Chinese culture and the tourism experience are used to discuss the experiential features and the three themes that emerged from the data analysis. In Section 5.2, the relationship between the tourism experience and Arctic sustainable tourism are outlined to illustrate the concerns, issues, advantages and challenges posed by Chinese visitors to Yukon. There are five suggestions listed and one sustainable tourism loop made to promote sustainable tourism development in the wider northern context. In Section 5.3, academic theoretical implications and practical applications are presented to show how the findings of this research can be applied to our understanding of Chinese visitors to the Arctic and sustainable development of the tourism industry in the Arctic. In Section 5.4 and 5.5, study limitations and recommendations for future research are presented. Finally, a brief conclusion of the study is presented. Based on an investigation of the filed notes and the tourism website content, the three themes of experiential features (nature, unique, and people-oriented) are identified. Then, five sustainable tourism development suggestions (environmental protection,

accessibility construction, cultural protection, market segment and tourism promotions) are discussed.

5.1 Yukon Winter Tourism Experiential Features and the Chinese Visitor

All experiential features, which were similar or overlapping, have been integrated and merged into three themes: nature, unique and people-oriented (see Section 4.2). To explain the nature of these experiential features and themes, the deeper cultural meanings behind the Yukon winter tourism experience promoted to Chinese visitors are assessed in this section.

5.1.1 Experiential theme: nature.

The first theme of Yukon winter tourism experiential features, ‘nature’, can be conceptualized as a theme that includes snow, mountains, wilderness, the aurora borealis and nature-based winter tourism activities. According to Urry (1995), tourists view tourism sites and landscapes with much greater sensitivity to the visual elements of the landscape than is normally found in their everyday life (p.132). The findings of this research reveal that natural landscapes represent symbolic rather than material experiential aspects. This finding also supports the work of Sun, Ryan and Pan (2015), who argued that Chinese visitors were particularly touched by nature. Their study indicated that the Chinese cultural background played an important role in the process of perception formation and interpretation of the tourism destination.

According to Hartig et al. (2003), being in natural environments instead of urban settings leads to more positive emotion and reduction in negative emotionality. Through a Chinese cultural lens, expressions, such as peace, awe, purity, joy, enjoyment, contentment and harmony, are related to an appreciation of the natural landscape. Therefore, every specific physical feature in the ‘nature’ theme produced ‘extraordinary’ emotional experiences. An ‘extraordinary’ experience is a nature-related experience and can be described as awe, spectacular, breath-taking, unrestrained, pure, tranquil, once-in-a-lifetime, romantic, joy, enjoyment, contentment and satisfied, but also includes feelings about various winter activities, such as excitement, exhilaration, novel, passionate and thrilling.

5.1.1.1 Experiential feature: snow.

The first experiential feature is the landscape of snow and ice. The snowy scene is an important meaning carrier for Chinese visitors as snow represents an auspicious and romantic landscape that gives promise of a fruitful future and a good harvest and entrusts hope to the person who experiences it. As the common Chinese saying states, “Timely snow brings a prosperous year and good luck”. Chinese people also use the saying, “We hope new couples grow old together with the grey hair and wish them a long life together”, which means, “I wish you a long and happy marriage” and “May you live in love till your hair turns grey”. Thus, taking a walk in the snow can be seen as having romantic undertones because white snow is synonymous with romance and purity (Weather China, 2017).

When it comes to the colour white, Guan (1936), the great politician, often used their white clothes during the Spring and Autumn Period of ancient Chinese literature to present their purity and loftiness (p. 39). The ancient Chinese felt that white symbolized light and expressed truth and innocence. Land, clad in snow, reflected the character of poetic thinking and the aesthetic culture of ancient China. Flowers, the breeze, snow and the moon were all signs of romance. The snow also represented sentiments related to the leisurely pursuits of the ancient literati (Lu, Lin, Fu, and et al., 2014, para.9). In Chinese paintings influenced by Taoism, white space reflects free and easy art aesthetics and snow presents a white blank page upon which nature creates her paintings. Based on Taoist philosophical ideas, the essence of Chinese painting is to use negative or empty space to give people a free and leisurely association, which suggests tranquility and comfort (Xu, 2010). By inviting white space into our lives, people create balance and a feeling of peace, particularly attractive given our busy modern-day lives. Thus, those white images use a colour whose appeal is based on the cultural appreciation of peace.

5.1.1.2 Experiential feature: mountains.

Lofty mountains are the second nature-related experiential feature. Confucius said, “The wise find pleasure in water; the virtuous find pleasure in hills”. The mountain represents

calmness, benevolence and virtuousness in Confucianism. Virtuous people (仁者 or rén zhě) refers to benevolent people with loving hearts who love and care about others. 仁 means virtue, benevolence, kindness and humanity. (Chan, 1995, p.295). Confucianism holds 仁 as the highest moral value. Thus, mountains can appeal to visitors' sense of awe and kindness by understanding Confucianism and self-examination.

Mountains have a specific meaning to the Chinese people because mountains are one of the elemental Taoist symbols. In traditional Chinese culture, mountains contain a forward-looking momentum, which has always garnered respectability and admiration. The oldest existing collection of Chinese poetry, *The Classic of Poetry*, described mountains as tall, sacred and stable. In the context of ever-changing nature, mountains are interpreted as stable and trustworthy because mountains never move while time brings changes to the world and truth is unalterable and eternal as are mountains. In Chinese culture, a virtuous person has an indestructible will for truth and faith and is not shaken by the external environment of the world. As my findings, when I was close to the majestic mountains, I could feel a sacred aura of calm around me (see findings in Section 4.2.1.1, p. 51). Mountains are the setting for Chinese ancient myths and legends and the destination of pilgrimages made by ancient emperors. Chinese people climb mountain peaks as a form of pilgrimage. The behaviour of physically climbing symbolically brings one closer to the heavens. In this sense, climbing mountains purifies the soul.

The 'unity of man and nature' is a concept with ancient roots in Chinese thought. A place with mountains and water denotes a good location, reflecting the harmony of the universe. This harmonious landscape of land and nature aligns with Chinese philosophical and aesthetic principles. As Zhuangzi and Laozi stated, "Heaven follows Tao, Tao follows nature". Chen (1961) stated that the affinity between man and nature is the basis of Chinese landscape painting (p.4). The principal of harmony in popular Chinese traditional thought describes the value Chinese people give to the mountains in their world view.

Graburn (1989) highlighted that tourists explored unique environments which were outside of their everyday relationships, describing tourism as a “sacred journey” (p. 25). Similarly, the findings in this study reveal that the Yukon winter tourism experience is “extraordinary” and different from other Yukon tourism experiences. The data revealed that ‘extraordinary’ also reflects positive emotions and complex emotions. For instance, a prominent experiential feature that emerged from mountain viewing was awe. Awe is a comprehensive feeling and can include feelings of confusion, fear, humility and other complex emotions (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). The experience of awe is not homogenous and is greatly influenced by different subjective responses. The nature-based tourism experience has a strong potential to deliver the awe feeling. The unforgettable memory and inspiration roused by mountains are also related to the experience of awe. On the one hand, the findings illustrate that awe can be generated by the vast natural scenery. The vast natural scenery and the majestic beauty of nature induce visitors’ sense of “small self”, which can be a perception felt when experiencing awe (Runsong, 2017). “Small self” occurs when personal interests are irrelevant and the personal identity is integrated into a larger life background, leading to the generation of collectivist values.

Renowned mountains in China are closely related to religion; as well, the sacred religious culture and Chinese culture of chivalry are related to sacred mountains. A Chinese adage states, “Most monks live in the famous mountains”. Mountainous places stimulate a sense of wonderment and cultural inspiration for Chinese visitors because the spirit of 武侠 (wǔxiá), or “swordsmen,” is a kind of Chinese national culture spirit. The sanctity of religious ambience promotes a positive spiritual pursuit (Piff, Dietze, Feinberg, Stancato & Keltner, 2015). It is a way to promote and strengthen tourists’ mental and emotional response. While there is potential to experience superior natural conditions in Yukon, there is a lack of developed tourism products related to this specialized Chinese culture.

5.1.1.3 Experiential feature: wilderness.

‘Wilderness’ is the third experiential feature. Wilderness supported enjoyment of winter’s tranquility and made Yukon more appealing for Chinese visitors. Fredrickson and Anderson (1999) found that wilderness trips contributed to tourists’ positive responses to the natural environment. Wilderness created a sense of loneliness for Chinese visitors as most of them were from the mainland China living in crowded cities which contrasted what they found when arriving to Yukon. Many introductions on websites described the wilderness and natural scenery as winter experiences geared to the Chinese visitor and these scenes often involved spectacular views and open spaces.

According to Shields (2013), the north is a frontier and an empty space. One interpretation of this emptiness is that it reflects the difference between urban and wilderness landscapes. Website content largely demonstrated location-based features using phrases, such as “northland of wilderness, the city of wilderness and near the Arctic Circle”. The website content suggested that the word ‘wilderness’ was associated with being outside of the hustle and bustle of cities and could be viewed through a Confucian lens. Travelling to Yukon meant escaping the noise and world of pressure. Yukon’s unique geographic location was portrayed as original, sparsely populated, wild and having a pure nature – these adjectives cater to the Chinese values associated with truth, goodness and beauty. Wilderness embodies a fascination with emptiness and white space arousing awe, joy and even inner peace in Chinese mental maps. Taoist philosophy advocates nature and mountain, forest and wilderness environments in nature are the highest level of artistic attainment. Experiencing spiritual peace and aesthetic pleasure also inspires the Chinese’ longing for nature.

5.1.1.4 Experiential feature: aurora borealis.

Northern lights or aurora borealis belong to the natural landscape and also constitute a nature- related experiential feature. Due to its mythological conceptualization, northern lights, as described on tourism websites, are auspicious and represent good wishes. The mythology and implied meanings related to the aurora borealis have been constantly redefined by Chinese and

foreign writers and explorers over the centuries. There has been much oral and written evidence proving China was the first country to observe the aurora. Many books have recorded such evidence, such as *The Book of Changes* (周易 or zhōuyì), *Book of Han: Treatise on the Five Elements* (汉书五行志 or hànshūwǔxíngzhì), and *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* (山海经 or shānhǎijīng) (Lao, 2015). There also are legends that the Chinese phoenix was formed by the aurora (Shi, 2018). According to Shi (2018), the multi-coloured clouds in Chinese classical literature are also interpreted as aurora. The northern lights have touched the oldest and most mysterious parts of Chinese culture: the Chinese mythology about the origins and beginnings of human beings. As discussed above, the aurora borealis is not merely an incredible winter spectacle but is part of experiential pursuits sought after by Chinese visitors.

5.1.2 Experiential theme: unique.

The findings reveal that ‘unique’ is the second theme of experiential features of winter tourism in Yukon. Cutler and Carmichael (2010) claimed that social interactions enhance individual experience and influence experience quality. The settings of the social environment can influence the interactions among tourists and the host/guest relationships. As in the research of Cutler & Carmichael (2010), this research explored the consequences of Chinese visitors’ social interactions. Social communication contributed to positive feedback about the destination and visitors’ satisfaction. For example, a group of exciting and stimulating tourists enhanced individual experiences of seeing the mountains (see Section 4.2.1.1).

By obtaining knowledge and learning about a new culture, a unique experience becomes an inner journey of personal growth and self-development and represents meaningfulness, as reflected in statements, such as “I did something meaningful during this trip” and “I did something important”. Through positive relationships with locals and by participating in local cultural tourism activities, visitors experience an educational and meaningful tourism experience. As the findings show, tour guides provide companionship and impart skills to visitors which produces an educational experience. Without the exposure to the experience stories shared by

tour guides, visitors' deeper understanding of the local culture is restricted affecting the overall experience to some extent.

The descriptive content of the local culture and folktales created diverse visual images of place in the minds of visitors. Additionally, the interaction with Indigenous and local people was a unique cultural activity and experience. Few visitors described direct social interaction with Indigenous people, however, visitors reported that experiencing Indigenous cultural activities and artwork created by locals was inspiring. Visitors felt the unique cultural atmosphere of the place. This study noted that an 'exotic' experience was connected to local cultural distinctness; this experience of the 'exotic' added some shine to the experience in exposure to the folk culture and the religious culture. For example, the raven pattern in the totem pole represented ancient Indigenous spirituality as well as their artistic aesthetics. Indigenous dances, songs, clothing and handmade crafts created a unique cultural atmosphere for visitors and a fresh tourism experience. Learning about the totem poles' culture and appreciating local artworks satisfied visitors' curiosity and longing to experience Indigenous culture and traditional lifestyle.

Searching for meaningful experiences within tourism activities is important to Chinese tourists (Yu & Yang, 2011), who seek a sense of spiritual fulfillment, cultivation of the mind and aesthetic satisfaction through tourism (Huang, 2010). As the findings show, the sub-feature, 'educational' (belonging to 'unique'), was related to the acquisition of knowledge and skills as well as personal fulfillment. Chinese visitors learned about Indigenous and Yukon culture by communicating with tour guides, through contact with Indigenous people, by participating in cultural tourism programs and by visiting the visitor center. For instance, by visiting the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, Chinese visitors learned new knowledge. The traditional teachings were presented and exhibited to future generations in the art displays. Visitors enjoyed a meaningful cultural tourism experience as showcased by artists and storytellers in this centre.

In this study, gaining new skills mainly related to winter adventure activities, like dogsledding and snowmobiling. The learning experience of a lifetime created and was marked as

a unique experience, which compared to findings in the study of Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick (2012). They argued that a tourism experience that is remembered positively is related to personal involvement, learning and novelty. Similarly, in this study, happiness and satisfaction were reinforced for Chinese visitors through the sense of achievement and the experience of educational tourism.

5.1.3 Experiential theme: people-oriented.

The third theme of winter tourism in Yukon reflects that friendlier design created a ‘people-oriented’ experience for Chinese visitors. First, the findings show that Chinese visitors preferred to visit a place they had dreamed of or a destination they heard of before because of the influence of the Chinese cultural value of self-enhancement. Chinese tourists viewed travel as a channel to increase experience, make the acquaintance of celebrities and enhance one’s knowledge. To gain self-understanding, Chinese visitors preferred to visit their dream destinations and to see unique and famous landmarks that they know about from social media or word of mouth. Effective tourism information and attractive stories improved the experience for them. Thus, developing various cultural products and promotional activities that create spiritual resonance satisfies tourists’ different expectations.

Similarly, Chinese visitors wanted to enrich themselves through gaining knowledge and experiences about such things as safety knowledge, survival skills and protective measures. In Chinese culture, travel is a means to becoming experienced. As the Chinese saying states, “Read 10,000 books and travel 10,000 miles.” As the findings show, engaging in outdoor, nature-based activities was popular, even with awareness of the risks associated with these outdoor activities. Online safety information, related to outdoor activities in Yukon, provided the necessary materials that were people-oriented and environmentally friendly. Adequate information, required for high-quality experiences, was provided as a people-oriented service to Chinese visitors. Apart from improving visitors’ capabilities, the cautions about appropriate behavior were intended to minimize stress to natural resources and vulnerable habitat.

Chinese travellers search for intellectual or spiritual enlightenment, and thus, tour guides may be seen as the change agents. In nature-based tourism, tour guides are seen as the experts as they interpret the natural environment in more depth for visitors who are largely from urban environments. Being truly closer to every tree and bush, instead of merely glancing at natural landscapes, can change Chinese visitors' outlook. Historically, Chinese people have pursued harmony with nature and nature-based tourism in Yukon can satisfy this pursuit when it is delivered with suitable leadership and informative guidance. Here, the design of the tour routes and the role of the tour guide are critical to educate visitors about the tourist destination making the services 'people-oriented' and 'environmentally friendly' and display nature's attractiveness, which contributes to a people-oriented and environmentally friendly services.

Moreover, the findings show that, while some activities and equipment were designed for children, there were no family tour packages offered in Yukon for Chinese visitors. A Chinese phrase, "the happiness of a family union is the best", illustrates the importance being together as a family and that, whatever their travel plans, Chinese visitors personally value the achievement of family cohesion through travel. In addition, interpersonal relationships in China historically reflect the value of family (Chon, 2012). Chinese people regard good personal relationships as important (Fu, Cai, & Lehto, 2015). Based on the Chinese value of the harmonious relationship, Chinese people appreciate the reciprocation of greetings, favours and gifts. This study found the online shopping guide heightened the sense of convenience for Chinese tourists. In considering shopping behaviour, according to Nielsen's (2017) survey that examined outbound Chinese tourism and consumption trends in 2017, Chinese tourists spent 25% of their total travel expenses on shopping, followed by accommodations (19%) and dining (16%). Sharing memories and gifts with family and friends was viewed as a harmonious experience. This finding is similar to the study of Lin (2016), which outlined that gift shopping for featured souvenirs enhanced harmonious relationships.

The importance of people-oriented social settings varied for different visitors and in different contexts. In this study, internet services for Chinese visitors to the Yukon were advantageous in terms of providing an access-friendly service. 81% of Chinese tourists use Wi-Fi, primarily choosing free public Wi-Fi hotspots (Nielsen, 2017). Due to a love of the nature and the attractiveness of the wilderness in Yukon, Chinese tourists' emotional intensity was high, regardless of the internet service. The periodic unavailability of smart communication and internet devices in the wilderness enhanced nature and social interaction experiences rendering internet service not the priority. While access to extensive network services offered convenience to tourists, the enjoyable experience occurred without internet service.

5.2 Arctic Sustainable Tourism Development

In this study, different experiential features reacted to different indicators of the Arctic sustainable tourism development (ASTD) analytical matrix. Based on the relevant data, some correspondence and alignment relationships were found (see details in Section 4.3). As a result, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of relationships between the tourism experience and sustainable tourism and has implications for both winter tourism development aimed at potential Chinese visitors.

Using the relationship between the tourism experience and sustainable tourism as the critical mechanism linked tourists' perceived surroundings and sustainable tourism development. Therefore, destination operators and managers can determine effective tourism strategies by applying sustainable tourism development indicators. The summary below lists five suggestions for the tourism market aimed at the Chinese winter visitor and sustainable tourism development and highlights sustainable development features that these suggestions feed into (see Table 6). These sustainable development features are from the Arctic sustainable tourism development (ASTD) analytical matrix (see specific indicators in Section 3.6.2).

Table 6. Tourism development suggestions and related sustainable tourism indicators.

Tourism Development Suggestion	Related Sustainable Tourism Features	
1. To focus on environmental sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Environmental quality · Educating the public · The land available for exploration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Greenhouse gas emissions · Wildlife protection · Adaptation of climate change
2. To improve the accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The ability of access · Continuous monitoring of performance · Supporting of government and community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cultural interactions · Seasonality management · Local career opportunities
3. To protect local culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cultural interaction and innovation · Residents' satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Indigenous culture preservation · Local participation
4. To subdivide the tourist market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Market development strategy · Local career opportunities · Cultural interaction and resonance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Indigenous culture preservation · Local participation · Educating the public
5. To increase the degree of promotion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cultural interaction and innovation · Tourist market development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cultural resource utilization · Local career opportunities

5.2.1 Focusing on environmental sustainability.

The tourism experience contributed to and was affected by environmental change as the experiential feature, nature, had both a positive and negative relationship with the ASTD indicators. The features related to nature provided a rich backdrop for analyzing destination attractiveness. Like many Arctic destinations, the Yukon tourism experience is based on its natural amenities, original landscapes, biophysical features and a sense of wilderness and remoteness. Since original nature-based tourism has the strong potential to deliver an extraordinary experience and these experiences enhance visitor on-site experience, the intensity felt and generated by the experience is regarded as a feature closely related to Arctic sustainable tourism.

By limiting the total number of tourists, the environmental carrying capacity of the tourist destination will not be exceeded. In the processes of destination design and construction, managers should carefully select the site and layout, minimize the impact on forest land and grassland, protect animal and plant resources and reduce noise and light pollution. Moreover, based on some surveys of various tourist routes in the Yukon, determining the number and distribution of garbage bins is a good way to maintain the environment. As the number of

tourists increases, the collection of garbage left in the scenic spots and forests needs to be taken seriously.

As findings illustrate, the maintenance of natural attractiveness is the result of environmental protection, but also, the result of the ecological will of tourists themselves. In this case, building a sustainable relationship can create a chain reaction of visitors' choices of the tourism destination and tourism experience concerning environmental development. As discussed above, the protection of wilderness maintains the landscape's original attractiveness. The natural physical setting can be preserved and promoted as an original space and an educational showcase. By maintaining the original state of nature, the content and design highlight environmental education and publicity. Outdoor environmental education is an important part of sustainable tourism development. An environmental education program can be established in Yukon tourist information centers or public spaces in the community, to train and educate visitors on ecological knowledge and environmental awareness. As for visitors to Yukon, understanding the geographic conditions in advance can shape their appropriate environmentally friendly tourism behaviour, strengthen a positive tourism experience and reduce complaints about the inconvenience and inaccessibility of the original natural environment.

The conservation of natural landscapes based on destination attractiveness can facilitate economic development and improve present generations own well-being in the long run. Today, the need is clear for both tourism operators and tourists themselves to promote nature and raise environmental awareness.

5.2.2 Improving accessibility.

With keeping nature related features, user-friendly accessibility meets some challenges while various humanized settings still can implement a positive experience. Thus, the type and nature of infrastructure become the highlight of further sustainable development. For Chinese visitors, accessibility specifically included four components. The first is basic tourism infrastructures and technological infrastructures, such as indoor washrooms, hot water, cell

phone networks and aurora predictions. For Chinese visitors travelling in winter, when viewing the aurora borealis during the night, preparation of hot drinks was warm and ‘consumer-friendly’. The cabins used for viewing the aurora were generally old facilities with no toilets. This damaged the romantic image of the destination to a certain extent. Thus, it can be seen that the layout of the toilets is irrational in suburban scenic. In addition, in view of the fact that there was no cell phone signal in individual resorts, the destination could cooperate with local telecommunications companies to improve the network.

The second component is technological infrastructures, such as cell phone networks and aurora predictions, which includes traffic accessibility. As de la Barre (2009) discussed, the territory’s remoteness and its accessibility are two contradictory destination marketing features. With satisfying visitors’ experience emphasis, providing necessary transportation services for tourists can allow the best of both features. Many attractions, winter activities and resorts, such as Sky High Wilderness Ranch and Takhini Hot Springs, were far away from Whitehorse’s city center. More transportation infrastructure in Whitehorse, but also in suburban and long-distance destinations, should be enhanced to promote city tours. Additionally, the road conditions in winter should be fully considered and the appropriate vehicles allocated so that accessibility and tourist safety can be ensured.

The third component is Chinese language translation services. The findings illustrate that translation service was necessary; preparing sufficient online and written information materials in advance, as well as training a translator who speaks both languages, improved the tourism experience and cultural communication. Therefore, preparing effective information and cultivating tourism service providers can facilitate the development of culturally related tourism products. By combining training to the tourism language service providers with raising awareness of the necessary skills, tourism development in the North also contributes to improving educational offers. Service providers could institute a locals-first policy, for locals who show loyalty, and invest in improving service quality and skill level to improve

competitiveness and the attractiveness of the destination. In addition, mobilizing international students and tourists with language skills can also solve the problem. Chinese visitors increasingly seek spiritual-filled and meaningful travel experiences that will satisfy their needs and desires. It is a trend to participate in specific types of tourism, such as educational tourism where skills are learned and knowledge shared, which facilitates unique experiences and learning for Chinese visitors. Thus, by encouraging potential language service providers to experience the local lifestyle and environment through working as a translator, the destination can temporarily and flexibly attract talent from foreign countries for seasonal tourism.

The fourth is tour guide services. ‘People-oriented’ service illustrates that the tour guide plays a significant role in obtaining a positive experience (see the content of tour guides’ roles in Section 4.2.1.3.1 and Section 4.2.2.3.1). Owing to this reason, destination managers should aim to increase the quality of tour guide education and skills. The findings show that visitors sought help from their tour guides first when emergencies occurred. In relation to training specifically, a focused effort on guide training certification is required. Skiing, dogsledding and snowmobiling tour guide education should develop skills emphasized in sports, but also interpretation skills and enhanced knowledge of environmentally responsible behavior. As the tour guide is the first contact person between international visitors and destinations, long-term planning should strengthen personnel training and cultivation with consideration of the needs and cultural differences of tourists. As well as providing information and translation services to Chinese visitors, the tour guide should focus on communication with tourists and conducting the tour in a comfortable way. Chinese visitors may require tour guides to give an educational interpretation in a destination to enhance their knowledge and foster their personal growth. Considering the multiple roles of the tour guide, tour guides should inform Chinese participants of the different customs in Yukon because cultural differences exist between tourism destinations and mainland China. Thus, there should be sufficient well-trained Mandarin-speaking tour guides.

5.2.3 Protecting local culture.

A ‘unique’ cultural experience largely arouses strong enthusiasm for Chinese visitors. Kim and Ritchie (2014) found that experiencing the local culture made travel more memorable. Indigenous culture in Yukon, as one of the experiential highlights, should be incorporated and developed. Travellers tend to choose a destination where there are different cultures and lifestyles in order to satisfy their desire to experience novelty (Pearce, 1987). Commodifying local ethnic traditions for tourist purposes relies on local culture inheritance and protection as well as local participation and is a good way to connect “unique” winter tourism and current societal challenges in the area of cultural heritage. As identified by the United Nations Environment Programme, negative social impacts of tourism include change or loss of Indigenous identity and values, culture clashes and increased demand for resources (Sustainable Tourism Alliance, 2015). As discussed, sustainable tourism should respect local cultures and people because positive experiential features are related to unique local culture and can have a positive impact on local communities, their heritage and environment as well as reduce inequalities.

As this study found, the lifestyle of honest, nice and kind local people brought a sense of fraternity and equality with respect. By developing tourism programs in the community, like Lumel Studio, residents can be included in using the tourism products and service. Tourists’ positive experience enhances their tourism experience and enhances active interactions with the local community and people. Therefore, maximizing cultural interactions and community participation through ‘bottom-up’ tourism development processes contributes to the minimization of negative social culture impacts, as well as promoting tourism development with a distinctly local flavour.

In addition, the findings demonstrate that the participation of local residents had a significant influence on the tourism experience in Yukon. Hence, the protecting of local culture and an understanding of residents’ attitudes can help policymakers and destination developers better

develop cultural tourism, as well as evaluate the community's perception of sustainable tourism development.

5.2.4 Subdividing the visitor market.

A sustainable tourism experience is identified by understanding the positive and negative relationships between the tourism experience and sustainable tourism. Managers should research the market and understand the demands of visitors and the requirements of sustainable tourism; only in this way can travel resources become a real attraction and service for tourism. In constructing sustainable attractiveness, destination operators need to subdivide the visitor market, aim at different demands of visitors and develop special tourism products. Destination managers can modify their tourism programs to effectively deliver tourism activities to their target customers. Additionally, new tourism products should consider Chinese cultural values. Operators can design tour packages targeted for certain groups of visitors, like the snow-ice tour, the cultural educational tour, the mountain pilgrimage and the shopping tour package.

For example, the snow-ice tour can be designed by combining snow and ice resources and other tourism resources. With the improvement of Chinese living standards, travelling during holidays has become a new choice for many families. During the Spring Festival, which is the winter holiday for various schools and companies, participating in ice-snow travel can meet Chinese visitors' requirement. Regarding the development of resources of snow, Yukon can appropriately develop unique tourism resources with characteristics of open space, large environmental capacity, high participation, thrill and excitement, which can further arouse the interest of snow and ice. Tourism products with high participation and low cost can also be added, like snowball fights and kicksledding.

In considering shopping, the findings reveal that most tourism websites provided information about the provincial sales tax and five tourism websites provided recommendations for shopping places; however, websites provided no information about sales of souvenirs. According to Mok and Defranco (2000), giving appropriate gifts is important for Chinese people

to maintain good relationships. Overseas gifts are very much appreciated as the majority of the Chinese people still cannot afford to travel overseas, as discussed in Chapter 2. Visitors to an overseas destination are likely to buy souvenirs for their friends and relatives living in China.

5.2.5 Increasing the degree of promotion.

The enjoyment, experienced from spiritual resonance and emotional contagion, was largely positively related to the sustainable factor of cultural interactions. The educational tourism experience provided self-enhancement and contributed to educating the public about sustainability. In Yukon, local culture can be transmitted to potential visitors by setting up multiple channels for advertising. The degree of promotion can be increased by studying Chinese visitors who have abilities and potentials to travel to Yukon and implementing promotions specifically for them, and, secondly, by studying their targeted experiences, preferences, consumption psychology and aesthetics. Firstly, high quality tourism services must be emphasized in the promotional content because Chinese visitors are focused on a consumer-friendly experience. Secondly, as a Chinese cultural value, Chinese visitors value storytelling techniques in tourism promotion. Within that changing natural and cultural landscape, there are advantages to having more Chinese cultural ‘emotional resonance’. Thus, specific marketing and interpretive information can contribute to sustainable tourism development.

Information about public figures or works of literature and art related to Yukon, should be considered in any promotion to the Chinese market, especially if popular in China because Chinese visitors prefer to choose tourism products recommended by an influential person or platform. Internet celebrities and bloggers should be considered too as Chinese people tend to trust non-commercial messages. Thus, these suggestions are necessary to implement for Yukon to maintain its attractiveness to potential visitors. On the one hand, internet with current and emerging multimedia features provides ample opportunities and is particularly useful for dealing with the intangible nature of services and transforming marketing variables to capitalize on the informational and transactional potential of the internet and to gain a competitive advantage.

Chinese tourism distributors and influential news reporters can be invited to participate in field trips and tourism experiences in Yukon. In this way, everyone can promote northern tourism after visiting Yukon.

Chinese outbound tourism, relying on language services, is experiencing a substantial increase. This trend, coupled with the global sharp climb in internet usage, should urge progressive northern tourism companies to redesign their websites to make full use of the capabilities of the internet for informational and transactional marketing practices. As the site design and marketing features on the internet are strongly interlinked, further attention to interactivity, navigation and functionality of their websites should also be given. To add to this, businesses should make full use of approaches and media, such as theme events and festival activities, to do external propagation.

Viewing the websites of tour operators is a good channel for Chinese visitors to scan the historical background and cultural knowledge of a tourism destination and furthers their education on local culture and increases respect for and enjoyment of cultural activities, such as snowshoeing, dogsledding, canoeing and attending traditional parades, traditional ethnic dancing and religious ritual activity (which are decreasingly used for their original religious, business or hunting purposes). While there was no information related to traditional and cultural activities found in the research, local knowledge about them was still present in Yukon. By becoming part of tourism activities and presenting more information on tour operators' websites, local knowledge is not only mobilized but also contributes to the reconceptualization and reactivation of cultural heritage and Arctic knowledge.

5.2.6 Arctic sustainable tourism development model.

Six considerations were identified through the analysis to advance sustainable development mechanisms used to promote sustainable tourism in the wider northern region: 1) destination attractiveness; 2) socio-economic benefits; 3) long-term planning; 4) marketing strategy; 5) community participation; and 6) environmental sustainability. Figure 11 shows a sustainable

tourism loop which reveals the sustainable destination making and wider northern winter tourism market in relation to making use of the experiential features design.

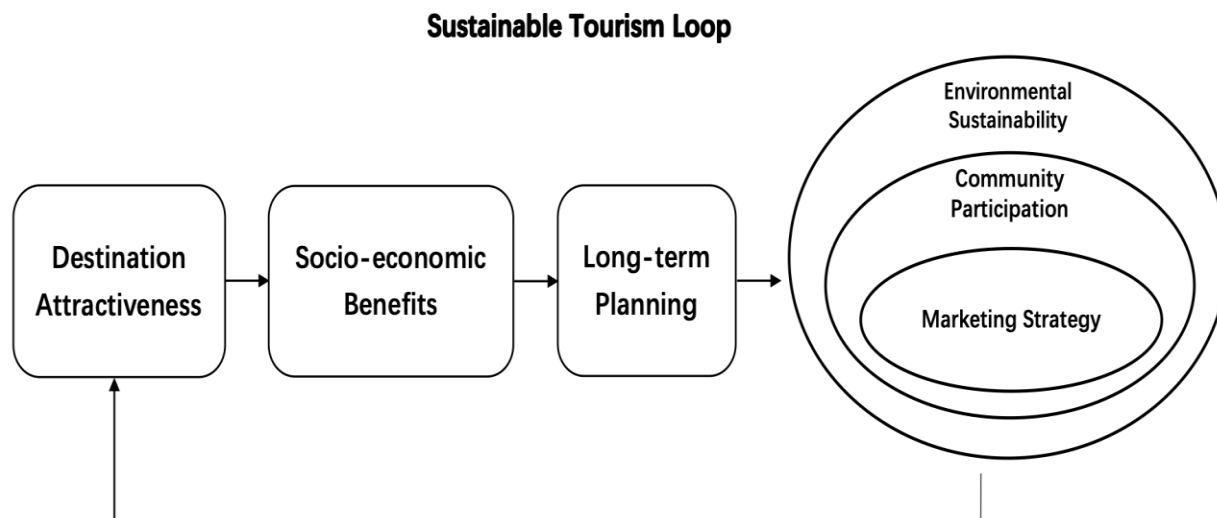


Figure 11. Sustainable tourism loop.

Broadly speaking, specific experiential features contributed to a better understanding of northern tourism attractiveness. Using destination attractiveness, guaranteeing accessibility and developing and promoting appropriate tourism programs can optimize economic benefits and minimize social costs. Together, tour operators, destination marketers and tourists play a key role in improving the tourism experience and minimizing natural and social costs. Therefore, long-term planning is a useful tool for advancing the goals of sustainable tourism. The ultimate driver for the development of the local tourism industry is maintaining destination attractiveness through using visionary marketing strategies, by maximizing community participation and in considering environmental sustainability.

Based on destination attractiveness, an appropriate marketing strategy creates more socio-economic benefits and expands the reach of marketing influence. Long-term planning of tourism in a sustainable way is established with a development schema with thorough consideration. The three-layers model, on the right side of Figure 11, presents a comprehensive long-term plan.

First, companies should sharpen their marketing strategies and long-term design of their operations to ensure the correct direction of development. It is necessary to offload the social burden to some extent, which needs rational management of social resources, which includes controlling tourism impacts, establishing regulations, eliminating the impact of tourism on Indigenous peoples and searching for sustainable management systems. As discussed above, the quality of services is a key factor in the development of a wide variety of winter tourism tours and products. Moreover, talent cultivation is an important way to improve the quality of tourism services, like training tour guides. For example, locals are more than qualified to take people out into the wilderness but they are not certified as instructors, even if they know more about the environment. This raises the question of how to train tour guides and how to create a certification protocol which acknowledges local knowledge while adhering to standardized requirements. People-oriented service depends on extensive vocational education and training, including cultural knowledge, foreign languages and professionalism. Sharing tourism experiences, information about the environment and tourism promotion can build positive publicity and educate visitors effectively. With adequate information, visitors to the northern regions can prepare in advance physically and mentally.

Secondly, findings show that community participation in tourism was the driving force behind local tourism development. Greater community involvement made visitors view the experience as educational, novel and that they were satisfied through various cultural interactions. Tourism development supported continued economic growth in local communities, which encouraged both jobs and community learning. The broad community learning encompassed cultural knowledge, social knowledge and traditional knowledge related to the spiritual and natural environment (Colton, 2005). This progress sustains sustainable economic and cultural development. The findings are similar to studies of Colton and Whitney-Squire (2010) and Harris (2009), which stated that tourism activities improve the standard of living and community infrastructure. Thus, positive community participation contributes to sustainable

tourism. Community-based development can be utilized as an effective means of fostering community benefits.

Governing bodies need to strengthen the appropriate control, management and monitoring, including collecting tourism data regularly, implementing strategies and handling tourist and community complaints. As for local communities, a governing body can be established to manage tourism activities, address complaints and protect the legitimate rights and interests of residents. For instance, offering Airbnb accommodation, developing local accommodation and participating in community volunteer services are seen as individual and family involvement in tourism development. Communities can develop ways to encourage more input and participation. In consideration of tourism development in the Indigenous community, community empowerment supports the cultural and social values inherent in aboriginal traditions (Colton, 2005; Colton & Whitney-Squire, 2010). Development of any tourism projects are grounded in respect for Indigenous culture, history and language. Importantly, destination managers, operators and visitors that undertake more responsibility concerning their economic outcomes, personal enjoyment as well as the environmental and social performance of their business and tourism behaviours, can earn broader community recognition among other competitors in the market.

Lastly, this research identifies the main sources of the natural, extraordinary and unique winter experience in the north as being the perceived vastness of the natural environment and the ambience of the winter activities. Offering diversified travel uses gives tourists more motivations to visit. According to natural environmental sustainability, future vulnerability can be forecast by combining societal and climate scenarios and integrating them with current vulnerability. This can provide an important baseline for things to come. If the current points of vulnerability are not addressed through effective adaptation processes, future vulnerability may then increase as climate change proceeds. Tourism contributes to and is affected by climate and environmental change. Thus, both tourism management and tourists should fulfil their responsibilities and

obligations to protect the environment. For instance, by reducing its carbon footprint in the north, especially in the transport and accommodation sector, tourism can benefit from low carbon growth. What is more, sharing environmental protection information with potential visitors can educate visitors effectively. In summary, both the entire tourism industry and tourists have the obligation to protect and maintain the natural and cultural heritage resources of our planet.

5.3 Implications of the Findings

5.3.1 Theoretical implications.

This study makes contributions to the tourism experience and the field of sustainable tourism theory. This research furthers the nature of experiential features of winter tourism promoted to Chinese visitors, as well as the academic understanding of the relationship between the tourism experience and sustainable tourism development. This study makes contributions to the theory in five ways. First, by using the tourism experience conceptual model (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010), findings identify many specific winter experiential features, including pure, romantic, extraordinary, awe, relaxation, freedom, excitement, exhilaration, novelty, educational and friendly, and are summarized in the three themes, nature, unique, and people-oriented (see findings of detailed features in Section 4.2).

Second, this study contributes to the research on knowledge of the tourism experience from Chinese cultural perspectives. The results of this research compensate for gaps in the area of understanding Chinese overseas winter tourism since there were few studies researching the Yukon winter experience within a Chinese visitor context. The findings state that experiential features meet Chinese cultural background and tourism preferences, such as the pursuit of nature and educational meanings, as well as extend the cultural tourism analysis beyond different religions.

Third, one contribution this study makes is it provided the gaze of a non-English culture in an English-speaking country and, as a result, promoted cultural understanding. This study identified four main fields: experiential features' identification, Yukon winter tourism

development, Chinese visitors background and sustainable tourism development. The majority of such studies were published in English and studied by the English-speaking culture, thereby avoiding cultural differences. For example, Farber & Hall (2007) surveyed visitors to northern Alaska and identified the emotional features of experiencing wildlife and scenery. De la Barre (2009) explored Yukon's place identity and tourism experience to identify special interest tourism. In this study, based on the interpretation of the website content and the review of the literature of Chinese culture, the influences of Chinese culture on the tourism experience were explored. Contributing to the research of the Canadian and Chinese tourism market, this study explored the winter tourism experience promoted to Chinese visitors using qualitative research methods. These methods allowed the subject of overseas tour operators who perceive winter tourism to be explored in a way that gazed at Chinese visitors.

Fourth, preceding studies of developing Arctic sustainable tourism were integrated into this study, including the sustainable model for Arctic regional tourism project and the evaluation index system of sustainable regional tourism development (Vaarala, 2006). Having combined specific indicators from Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations [GSTC-D] (GSTC, 2013) and six principles for sustainable Arctic tourism (Vaarala, 2006), a new Arctic sustainable tourism development analytical framework was created to indicate the relationship of tourists' experiential features and sustainable tourism development (see Table 4). This framework works for Chinese visitors to Yukon and Yukon tourism operators and managers.

Fifth, this research also reveals there is a compatible relationship between experience and the ASTD indicators. Most of the experiential features have a positive function relation with ASTD indicators and some features have a negative relationship or no relationship with existing ASTD indicators. Their relationship is summarized to support the suggestions of sustainable tourism development and management. The findings reflect the results of sustainable tourism development and enlighten further sustainable strategies. Five main strategies of sustainable tourism development and the Arctic tourism development sustainable loop model have been

explored and discussed (see Section 5.2). In this way, this research serves as the theoretical background for future studies regarding wider northern winter tourism development.

5.3.2 Study applications.

The practical implications for this study can be applied to three aspects. The first one is the identification of visitors' winter experiential features in the context of Chinese visitors travelling to Canada. The findings explore experiential features of winter tourism and the themes, nature, unique and people-oriented. Also, the identified experiential features can support tour operators to improve website-based marketing. Although many tour operators are using their websites to promote tourism, they have not fully utilized their capabilities to present tourism attractiveness and educate the public.

The second aspect is that the results of this study create space for advancing knowledge in the field of experiential features designed to deliver to the potential Chinese visitors. According to O'Dell and Billing (2005), experiences are personal and play as a material base on strategically planning. Together with the current study results, an understanding of experiential features could help the local government and tourism businesses design and develop appropriate tourism programs to induce improvement of visitors' travelling experiences and sustainable tourism products. An understanding of experiential features is essential for the local government, communities and tourist agencies to induce improvement of visitors' travelling experiences and tourism products. Five suggestions are promoted to benefit and manage Arctic tourism development (see details in section 5.2).

Third, the relationship between experience and sustainable tourism suggests that the destination attractiveness is the critical mechanism linking tourists' perceived surroundings and sustainable tourism development. Three-layers model of long-term planning of sustainable tourism development has been built to support sustainable strategies (see in section 5.2.6).

5.4 Study Limitations

This study is not free from limitations. First, the generalizability of the research conclusions is limited. In this study, the analyzed data was collected, produced and explained by the researcher. Further attention should be paid to the interpretation of the findings. On the one hand, this study examined the tourism experience from the perspectives of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism only. Other religions, which are also popular in mainland China, were not included in the study, such as Christianity and Islam. Moreover, China is a vast country with vast territory and numerous nationalities; thus, there are undeniably national and cultural differences. Therefore, consideration of cultural differences is necessary before recommending its findings as a universal summary to identify experiential features of Chinese visitors. Another limitation of the present study is that it examined a limited number of experiential factors. To enhance our understanding of Chinese visitors' experiential features, future research should be expanded to include other experiential factors mentioned but not discussed in this study, especially those that pertain to negative feelings, like regret, anger and frustration.

Another limitation is the small sample size since only sixteen websites were equipped with Chinese language support capacity. This study's sample was mainly selected from local tourism companies located in Yukon. Thus, the results may be biased against tourism companies of other locations.

Because China is a big and populated country, the Chinese tourism market has complexity and particularity. Because of Chinese visitors' cultural background, the characteristics of the experiential features are many-sided. That means it is useful to deeply understand Chinese visitors. Visitors' on-site feedback and insight into the types, motivations and demands of potential Chinese visitors was lacking. Visitors' on-site feedback plays an important role in understanding the tourism experience. Nevertheless, this study did not interview Chinese visitors directly to gain insights into their tourism experience.

5.5 Future Research

More diverse research methods could be used in future studies, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups. Interviews are able to access the on-site tourism experience and make the results richer. Focus groups can trigger more information in discussions that occur between group members, for example, different understandings of Chinese cultural symbols.

Future studies should either include other newly established local tourism companies with Chinese language support or include tourism companies from other Arctic regions similar to Yukon with language support. Comparison of the differences in website marketing design among various types of tourism companies should be made. Future research using a different sample would produce different kinds of useful findings.

In addition, a longitudinal study is recommended to keep track of the websites of tourism companies over a specific period of time leading to results that can demonstrate whether and how companies improve their experiential features' design and validate sustainability as identified in this study. For example, after promoting new tour packages to future Chinese visitors, further research could investigate visitors' feedback and level of satisfaction. Further research also could comparatively examine the suggestions for sustainable tourism implementation.

Based on the discussion of sustainability in this study, destination managers and operators might be interested in the various influences on the tourism experience. Future studies can investigate how Chinese visitors' experience affects destination marketing outcomes, social benefits and environmental development.

5.6 Thesis Conclusion

The development of a winter tourism market is gaining significant attention. Yukon Territory is the Canadian Arctic's most visited winter destination and China is an emerging market to Canada. This study provided understanding of the winter tourism experience and contributed to sustainable tourism development in the wider northern polar region. The experiential features of winter tourism were varied and included terms, such as extraordinary,

awe, excitement, novelty, educational and friendly, and were organized into the themes, nature, unique and people-oriented. The experiential features promoted to Chinese winter tourism visitors to Yukon were mostly explained through Chinese culture. The relationships between experiential features and indicators of the Arctic sustainable tourism development were compatible in relationship. The importance of the relationship of experiential features to sustainable tourism development was identified, which provided recommendations for the development and advancement of sustainable winter tourism, specifically in relation to the Chinese market. This study identified that the sustainable development of tourism should focus on environmental sustainability, accessibility construction and cultural protection. Suggestions, to promote sustainable tourism development, such as subdividing the visitor market, strengthening the quality of services and increasing the degree of promotion, were offered.

In summary, the link between the tourism experience and sustainable tourism development, although not a new phenomenon, is receiving increasing attention in winter tourism in the north, especially in the context of the Chinese visitor market. Results, from the analysis of the experiential features and the relationship with Arctic sustainable tourism, illustrate a number of challenges and opportunities facing the development of sustainable winter tourism in northern regions. The study is meaningful since it offers considerations for sustainability in the wider northern winter tourism development context.

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APPENDIX A: Yukon Winter Field School Outline and Itinerary

TRMT 391 Yukon Winter Tourism Field School (YWTFS)



Instructor: Suzanne de la Barre, PhD
Email: suzanne.delabarre@viu.ca
Office phone: Cell: 250-802-7155 (NOTE: Faculty member is on leave, and is not VIU campus based from June 15, 2017 to August 15, 2018)
Office Location: See above
Class Time: Sunday, February 25 to Saturday, March 3, 2018
Class Location: Yukon Territory
Office Hours: N/A

COURSE DESCRIPTION

There is an increasing interest in cold climate cultures and their environments around the globe. Using our field-based learning experience in the **Yukon Territory** as a case study, this course will critically examine winter tourism issues and opportunities through themes such as: tourism and climate change; pan-polar cold climate cultures; winter tour operators and tourism entrepreneurship; creating winter tourism experiences and itineraries; and destination development, planning and strategies. Learning objectives will be achieved through participation in discussions with tour operators and other **Learning Partner** hosts, through course readings and assignments, including reflective journaling and learning summaries, which will be shared in our **World Leisure Centre of Excellence** connected blog, as well as through a social media campaign aimed to educate the general public on the winter world, its peoples and environment, and the challenges and opportunities that accompany its winter season tourism development.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completion of this course, learners will be able to:

1. **Identify** how tourism in the northern hemisphere is different and similar to tourism occurring elsewhere;
2. **Explain** seasonal tourism in the circumpolar north, its characteristics, and the opportunities and challenges associated with it;
3. **Describe** the significant characteristics of winter tourism in the Yukon, and **demonstrate** an ability to make comparisons to winter tourism in other circumpolar regions of the world;
4. **Provide** perspectives on what are cold climate cultures, and **explain** why these are gaining the interest of visitors from around the world;
5. **Apply** knowledge of sustainable development frameworks to **understand and plan** tourism development in the circumpolar north.

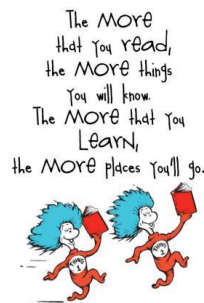
LEARNING RESOURCES

Due to the international student composition of this course, we will use the YWTF's Facebook page for our course organization and learning platform and to access course information, readings, communications, and other learning tools. Readings and a list of viewing resources will be provided to students at least one month before the course begins (hard copy and electronic version).



Additional Resources

- Citation and APA Style: <http://libguides.viu.ca/citing>
<http://libguides.viu.ca/content.php?pid=46982&sid=613599>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>
- Preventing Plagiarism: <https://learningmatters.viu.ca/topic/prevent-plagiarism>
- Learning Matters is a website <http://learningmatters.viu.ca/> dedicated to providing academic assistance to VIU students
- Learn how to learn: <https://learningmatters.viu.ca/topic/learn-how-learn>



Attendance

The YWTFS takes place from February 25 - March 3, 2018. Development of the technical skills and conceptual knowledge needed to be successful in this course requires that you participate in all aspects of the field school, prior, during and post field school time spend in Yukon, and that you demonstrate active engagement in the learning environment.

Please note the VIU course attendance policy, including the guidelines you should be aware of in #3 of the list of attendance challenges provided: <https://www2.viu.ca/facultyhelp/Attendance.asp>

For field school planning purposes, you may want to consult VIUs list of important dates: <https://calendar.viu.ca/academic-and-career-preparation-programs-2016-2017>

Preparing for this Course

To successfully complete this course, it is important that you refer to the course outline, the field school itinerary, and that you engage with the field school Facebook platform, as well as the public access field school website, before, during and just after the course (until the last assignment is submitted). The Facebook page will provide field school updates, peer discussions and planning information, news items and resources that will assist your to prepare for out time together “in the field”. The website will consist in our public engagement/education component, and acknowledge the support from our *Learning Partners*.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

The following table describes the assignments required to complete this course. It is your responsibility to ensure you are aware of assignment details, including being aware (and staying on top) of all due dates. Please refer to the assignment description documents for more information on each of these assignments (they will be provided to you with the reading package, one month prior to when the course begins). Any changes will be communicated to the student as soon as possible.

Assignment	Due Date	Submission	Weight
Assignment 1: Daily field notes and reflective learning journal	Morning of March 3, before departure back to Nanaimo/Vancouver.	Hardcopy of field note book to Suzanne	30%
Assignment 2: Winter field day blog entry (text, video, photos)	One entry per student during the field school, set out in a schedule before the course begins.	Uploaded to the YWTFS WordPress website (with assistance from the YWTFS Assistant Event Coordinator)	20%
Assignment 3: Winter Tourism Experience Development Report x 2	One week after the end of the Field School: March 10, 2018.	Via email to Suzanne; WORD document only	25% x 2
TOTAL			100%

Assessment

Learning will be evaluated along a time continuum that requires students to look into the past to synthesize their own learning and the preoccupations of the field.

1. This course may involve formative assessment activities and exercises. “Formative” assessment means you will have a chance to learn and get feedback on your learning in a non-graded context. These are **significant opportunities** meant to foster a positive approach to learning, and will help you prepare for graded assignments.
2. Graded assignments’ due dates. **Submission and Return of Work.** All assessments are to be submitted as per assignment instructions. Late assessments will not be accepted.
3. **Assessment Extensions:** Extensions will be granted by exception based upon **evidence** of an unforeseen circumstance beyond the control of the student that has reasonably impacted his/her ability to prepare and submit an assignment. Please send me an email/discuss with me the situation **as soon as possible**. Failure to communicate with me can result in unnecessary challenges for both of us; so please communicate with me if an unforeseen event is impacting your academic performance.
4. Every effort will be made to return assessed assignments and course grade back to you within two weeks of completing the field school; any changes in the expected return date will be communicated to you by email or in person.

Grade Descriptions

Please refer to the University Calendar for a description of the grading system. The Instructor will assign a letter grade for each assignment and a final course letter grade based on each student’s performance during the semester. Final grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

Grade Scale Table Effective September 1, 2010		
Grade	Percentage (%)	Point Description
A+	90-100	Excellent (First Class Standing)
A	85-89	
A-	80-84	
B+	76-79	Good
B	72-75	
B-	68-71	
C+	64-67	Satisfactory
C	60-63	
C-	55-59	
D	50-54	Poor
F	0-49	Failing work Unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.

ACADEMIC AND STUDENT CODES OF CONDUCT

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity (AI) is one of the most significant foundations of the Canadian University System and violations of AI are taken very seriously. You are strongly encouraged to familiarize yourself with all aspects of the Student Academic Code of Conduct

<https://www2.viu.ca/facultyhelp/CodeOfConduct.asp> and to ensure that you act accordingly.

Standards of academic integrity include, but are not limited to:

- Independently producing work submitted under one's own name;
- Properly and appropriately referencing all work; and
- Identifying all collaborators in work.

From VIUs Academic Misconduct Statement

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following acts:

1. **Cheating** is an act of deception by which students misrepresent that they or others have mastered information for an academic exercise.
2. **Fabrication** is the intentional use of false information or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive.
3. **Plagiarism** is the intentional unacknowledged use of someone else's words, ideas, or data. When a student submits work for credit that includes the words, ideas or data of others, the source of that information must be acknowledged through complete, accurate, and specific references, in a style appropriate to the area of study, and, if verbatim statements are included, through quotation marks or block format as well. By placing their names on work submitted for credit, students certify the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgments.
4. **Facilitation of Academic Misconduct** is helping or attempting to help another to commit act(s) of academic misconduct as outlined above.

This course uses APA 6th Edition guidelines for reference lists as well as in text citations, table and figure formatting, and references. Please refer to the APA style guide (6th Ed) and other resources provided to you by the university, the department or in this outline. Careful referencing of sources is vital when making use of the work of others. These conventions apply to information taken from internet sources, as well as books, journals and any other sources.

These are some of the points you should check before submitting your work:

- Have you paid attention to the rules for proper paraphrasing?
- Have you acknowledged the source of ideas that are not your own, even if you are not quoting directly from the source?
- Are all direct quotations, from both primary and secondary sources, appropriately acknowledged?
- Have you provided full details (author, year, page number) of the source of the quotation used?
- If you have worked closely with others in preparing for this assessment, is the material you are presenting sufficiently your own?

Please become familiar with the Guidelines Concerning Academic Misconduct:

<http://csci.viu.ca/~liuh/AcademicGuidelines.html>

Student Academic Code of Conduct

<https://www2.viu.ca/facultyhelp/CodeOfConduct.asp>

Preventing Plagiarism

<https://learningmatters.viu.ca/topic/prevent-plagiarism>

From VIUs Student Code of Conduct

Vancouver Island University students are expected to behave in a responsible manner respectful of the learning environment inside the classroom and throughout the campus. This policy applies to all Vancouver Island University campus and off-campus locations where Vancouver Island University sponsored activity is occurring.

Please note that the above directive includes the Winter Tourism Field School in the Yukon as it is a VIU sponsored activity.

For more information on VIU's general regulations, please go to:

<http://www.viu.ca/calendar/GeneralInformation/generalregulations.asp> and

<http://www.viu.ca/students/>

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Course Changes

Students will be advised of any changes made to the course outline, course schedule, and assignments with as much advance notice as possible.

Students with Disabilities

Alternative assessment arrangements may be made, where appropriate, for students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities wishing to be considered for alternative assessment arrangements should

contact Disability Services for information on available support: <https://www2.viu.ca/disabilityservices/>

It is also helpful for students with special needs to alert the Instructor as early as possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be made from the start of the course.

Snow was falling,
so much like stars
filling the dark trees
that one could easily imagine
its reason for being
was nothing more than prettiness.

- Mary Oliver

Vancouver Island University/World Leisure Centre of Excellence
2018 Yukon Winter Tourism Field School

Partners in Learning



Northern Institute of
Social Justice



APPENDIX B: Characteristics of Arctic Tourism

Environment and Climate		
CHARACTERISTICS	IMPACTS	TRAINING NEEDS
Highly seasonal, extreme weather	Short season, limited revenue generating season	Value-added for increased revenue
Weather undependable, sometimes life-threatening	Special clothing and equipment	Programming to mitigate delays/cancellations
Locations remote	Limited access to healthcare, emergency response	High level of training in first aid, emergency / contingency plans; risk management plan
Ground conditions	Affects construction and operation of facilities	Low impact infrastructure; technical knowledge of waste management and minimizing.
Slow growing flora, environment delicate	Land quickly damaged, but slow to recover	Use of vehicles; no trace camping; alternate transportation
Fauna unique but often widely spread	Wildlife viewing may be seasonal, not always easy to find	Programming with hard-to-find wildlife (<i>e.g. know habits, habitat of wildlife; alternate activities related to wildlife; provide guests with realistic expectations; program not solely based on viewing one type of wildlife</i>)
	Often stressed by excessive human activity	Recognizing signs of stress; establishing wildlife viewing guidelines
Working on and around sub-zero waters	Hypothermia can set in within a few minutes for people falling overboard, overturned boats, etc.	Superior safety equipment, survival suites
Infrastructure		
CHARACTERISTICS	IMPACTS	TRAINING NEEDS
Many communities remote	High construction costs	Providing high quality service to justify high cost of tourism products
Transportation links may be limited	Public transportation expensive, sometimes infrequent, limited options	Learning to program according to airline schedules, fall-back programs
Community infrastructure may be limited	Accommodations limited and sometimes substandard (not corresponding to high-end clientele)	Providing quality service in simple facilities; operators working with local accommodations providers
Costs of building and maintaining infrastructure high	Forces high cost tourism products	Options such as B&B's, hospitality meals / meals with local residents

Limited local building material	Infrastructure materials virtually all imported	Learning about environmentally friendly alternatives
Environmentally friendly products not available and not widely accepted		Educating local population; creative construction solutions
Communications problems in remote areas	Interruptions in (esp. electronic) communications	Training in electronic communications
	Missed business opportunities	Training in back-up communication plans
Socio-Economics		
CHARACTERISTICS	IMPACTS	TRAINING NEEDS
Most Arctic areas are remote areas of developed countries	Have higher expectations regarding income than under-developed countries	Service levels must be high to justify high-cost products; visitor expectations
Populations more sparse than in southern areas	Large labour force may not be available	Benefits to communities besides jobs
Educational levels on average lower than urban areas	Business and tourism skills often lacking	Doing business in the Arctic; Resources available; Marketing the Arctic; Branding AST
Limited access to training / educational facilities (and trainers)	Training programs are costly and challenging to design / deliver; physical training facilities limited	Development of varied training mechanisms / "road-shows"
Cost of living / cost of doing business high	Passed on through pricing of products	Pricing
Culture		
CHARACTERISTICS	IMPACTS	TRAINING NEEDS
Usually differs significantly from urban areas	Requires cross-cultural sensitivity by trainers, tourism operators and visitor education	Cross-cultural training for operators and cultural learning for visitors
Local languages and dialects different from mainstream	Local operators may have difficulty communicating with international travellers	Language training, tourism terms
May have different world view	Misunderstandings may occur between visitors, local operators and local residents	Communication between tourism business and other residents
Closer relationship with the land	Visitors need to learn new inter-action with the land; operators need to respect the land	Promoting mutual respect between visitors and residents
Sustainable Model for Arctic Regional Tourism (SMART) – project (2005)		

APPENDIX C: Six Principles for Sustainable Arctic Tourism

SUSTAINABLE ARCTIC TOURISM

1. Supports the local economy

Supporting stands for employing staff, buying goods and services and paying tax locally. Tangible benefits from tourism are a positive force.

2. Operates environmentally friendly

Establish and continuously improve environment policies. Transportation, waste and lodging impact policies are adjusted to local conditions.

3. Supports the conservation of local nature

The ecological carrying capacity of the area must be respected. The local inhabitants and tourism operators have a right to participate in land use planning on local and regional level. The operator should have thorough knowledge and co-operate with other actors and should give active support to preferably local conservation projects.

4. Respects and involves the local community

Promoting and preserving local cultures, lifestyles and values sets limits and rules to tourism. Quality tourism depends on active support from and benefit to local people. The networking between different stakeholders in the region is highly encouraged.

5. Ensures quality and safety in all business operations and

Sustainable tourism is quality tourism. This includes administration, planning, acting as a good host and implementing safety issues in quality management policy.

6. Educates visitors about local nature and culture.

Sustainable tourism is based on curious and respectful visitors. Operators use knowledgeable guides and constantly improve the awareness level of the personnel. The visitor is given information of the sustainable tourism in the region.

Sustainable Model for Arctic Regional Tourism (SMART) –project (2003)

APPENDIX D: Summary of Physical Elements Narrative

Narrative text	Source
The broad wilderness; vastness and expansiveness; natural, original, ecological, unpolluted.	
...open space...the beauty of northern wild nature. The city is not polluted, people seem to live in wonderland.	Keep exploring Canada; Yukon home and tour
There is no wide variety of activity, only the pristine blue water.	Yukon Wide Adventures
The greatest attraction of the Yukon is its majestic wild nature...blue sky and white clouds, emerald mountains, natural and pure ...and to experience the vast expanse and beauty of the great wide north. You can enjoy the beauty of the Yukon River. The two sides of the river are high-altitude jungles. There are dense forests, winding mountains, and creeks flowing into the Yukon River. There are no traces of artificial development, and everything is original and wild. It is a temptation to live independently in the wilderness!	Ctrip
Carcross has less than 500 population.	Mafengwo
The dog takes you to the vast snowfield and experiences wilderness.	Rocky mountain
... to release the wild man inside you.	Yukon home and tour
Whitehorse is one of the least polluted cities in the world.	RRUU-Renyou
There are hundreds of thousands of wild animals in the Yukon, and their density is far greater than the population density.	Cantrip (Canada) Co.Ltd
Pure	
The fields are white and pure and full of snow... snowcapped peaks...	All sixteen websites
Quiet and tranquil, leisureliness	
Quietly we walk through the loose powder snow and enjoy the silence and loneliness.	Yukon wide adventure
It is a kind of undisturbed in the unmanned area of 320 kilometers, and it is a temptation to enjoy 8 days of tranquility! When you get here, the first thing you feel is silence. There are no noisy crowds here, no high-rise buildings, and the biggest store except Wal-Mart is the outdoor store.	Ctrip
Mysterious Northern Lights	
Whitehorse Aurora tour, Northern lights tour, Yukon Aurora tour or Whitehorse leisure Northern lights tour are appeared in the homepage. Or the front-page feature on Northern lights has shown on the homepage.	Fourteen websites design this except Yukon wide adventure, and QYER.
The travel agency arranged for tourists to wait for the long-awaited Northern Lights in the wooden house on the first night.	CITS-Dalian branch

During this trip, we specially arranged for four consecutive nights to watch the aurora in order to increase the probability of seeing the aurora.	Arctic outback adventures
Unique wildlife	
We saw two bears ran out of the trees from the roadside and rushed onto the road.	Ctrip
You may also see wild animals in the Arctic during the flight: bighorn antelope, elk and fox	Top top international tour Ltd [TTIT].
You can stroll through the valley, where you can find a variety of pine trees, like timber pine, fir trees, and birch trees.	CITS-Dalian branch.
The Yukon Wildlife Preserve has many wild animals such as the wood bison, Canada lynx, arctic foxes, woodland caribou, thin horn sheep, mountain goat, elk, muskrat, moose, reindeer, etc.	Twelve websites describe it except Yukon wide adventure, Rocky mountain, TTIT, and RRUU.
The uncertainty of the weather	
The wind is suddenly big, in this case it is impossible to move on anyway. Several times we were forced to land because of the big waves. In the face of sudden big waves, no one can help us, there is only one choice, and that is waiting.	Ctrip
This winter tour has many elements of an expedition and therefore changes in the itinerary due to weather and road conditions are a possibility.	Sixteen webs mention that except Arctic colour tours, Yukon wide adventure, and TTIT.

APPENDIX E: Themed Content of Website Images

Themed content of website images	Number of images	Source
White snow		
All winter-related pictures are white snow.	9	Arctic colour tours
	7	Yukon Wide adventure
	11	Yukon home and tour
	5	TTIT
All pictures except the indoor view are white snow.	75 of 102	Ctrip
Most winter-related pictures are white snow.	11 of 16	Mangfengwo
	75 of 102	Ctrip
	4 of 7	Charming holidays
Northern light		
All winter-related pictures are the aurora.	6	Rocky mountain
	6	Arctic Range adventure
In the front-page images; photos of the snow scenery under the aurora are displayed.	1 as background	TTIT
	1 as background	Yukon home and tour
	1 of 8	Keep exploring Canada
	2 of 2	CITS-Dalian branch
	2 of 7	Charming holidays
	3 of 6	Ctrip
	3 of 7	RRUU-RENYOU
	4 of 4	Rocky mountain
	5 of 11	Mangfengwo
	7 of 11	Arctic range adventure
10 of 13	Arctic outback adventures	
Where there is an aurora, there is snow in the picture.	10	Arctic outback adventures
	2	CITS-Dalian branch

APPENDIX F: Summary of People-oriented and Access-friendly Services Design

Humanized narratives	Source
Translation service	
Chinese speaking service	Ten websites except below six webs.
Multi-language service	Yukon home and tours.
English speaking service	Yukon wide adventure; Charming holidays.
No translation service, but the web is in Chinese.	Rocky mountain; RRUU-Renyou; Arctic outback.
Safety instructions and keeping warm	
	Arctic colour tours; Keep exploring Canada; RRUU-Renyou; Cantrip; Rocky mountain; Mafengwo; Yukon wide adventure.
Winter clothing rental of warm Northern outfitters jacket, pants, and mitts.	
	Yukon wide adventure; Arctic outback; Arctic range adventure; Yukon home and tours.
Insurance recommendation	
	Charming holidays; CITS-Dalian branch; RRUU-Renyou; Yukon home and tours; Cantrip; Rocky mountain; Mafengwo; Arctic colour tours.
Cancellation policy	
	Arctic colour tours; CITS-Dalian branch; Yukon home and tours; Arctic range adventure; RRUU-Renyou; Rocky mountain.
Personal butler service	
Reserve airline tickets	CITS-Dalian branch; Rocky mountain.
24 hours private butler service	Arctic range adventure; TTIT; Arctic colour tours.
Tour guide prepares the camera.	Arctic outback.
Kitchen facilities prepared well	RRUU-Renyou; Arctic colour tours.
Professional coach	
	Arctic outback; Charming holidays; Cantrip; Arctic range adventure; Yukon home and tours; Mafengwo; Yukon wide adventure; Arctic colour tours.
Hot drinks and snacks	
	Arctic colour tours; RRUU-Renyou; Rocky mountain; Charming holidays; CITS-Dalian branch; Cantrip; Ctrip; Yukon home and tours.
Online payment	
	Cantrip; Yukon home and tours; Rocky mountain.
Aurora Prediction	
	Arctic range adventure.
Shopping Guide	
Shopping place recommendations	Charming holidays; Cantrip; Ctrip; Mafengwo; Arctic colour tours.
5% GST (Government Tax)	Charming holidays; RRUU-Renyou; Arctic range adventure; Yukon home and tours; Ctrip; Arctic colour tours; Rocky mountain; Mafengwo; Yukon wide adventure.

