

Creative tourism and creative spectacles in China

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ABSTRACT

The topic of creative tourism has gained a growing amount of attention from scholars in recent years. However, although the importance of festivals and events in such tourism has been acknowledged, the nature of and role of such “creative spectacles” in creative tourism has not been adequately addressed. This paper aims to address this research gap. To do so, this paper will begin by introducing a suitable definition of creative spectacles based on earlier references to it in Richards and Wilson’s (2006) formative paper on creative tourism as well as based on explanations of creative tourism that have been given since. To shed light on the practical nexus between creative tourism and creative spectacles, this paper will subsequently provide a survey of and concrete examples of creative tourism experiences as they relate to various festivals and events in China’s UNESCO-designated creative cities through travel blog analysis. Our paper will conclude with recommendations for tourism planners as well as suggested areas for future research.

1. Introduction

A growing volume of literature on “creative tourism” has emerged ever since the term was first introduced some two decades ago in reference to a type of tourism that “offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken” (Richards & Raymond, 2000, p.18). Increasing awareness of the fact that many tourists actively seek participative, learning experiences during their travels (Richards, 2014), is evident worldwide in the growth of experiential travel initiatives catered towards such tourists. However, despite growing academic interest as well as the rise in practical, on the ground efforts to promote creative tourism, very little has been written about how festivals and events figure in such tourism. In particular, while creative tourism is widely understood as a growing niche area of tourism that involves more experiential encounters and greater learning opportunities for the tourist, the literature to date has been largely confined to addressing the potential of creative tourism, and to a lesser extent how creative tourism experiences occur in particular places (creative spaces) or between peoples (Chen & Chou, 2019; Nelson, 2015; Tan, Kung, & Luh, 2013; Tan, Luh, & Kung, 2014; Thimm, 2014; Wang, Liu, Wei, & Zhang, 2020; Zhang & Xie, 2019).

The lack of research on the role that festivals and events play in creative tourism is surprising given that the formative academic paper

on creative tourism recognised their importance (Richards & Wilson, 2006). In particular, Richards and Wilson (2006) acknowledged the important role “creative spectacles” may have in helping to introduce new creative elements into tourism programmes, thus serving to innovate tourism products and services. They also maintained that such festival events can help differentiate cities and the increasingly homogeneous urban landscapes within them (Richards, 2014; Richards & Wilson, 2006). Nonetheless, while some additional references have been made in the literature on creative tourism to “creative spectacles” (Richards, 2011, 2014), explanations of what such festivals and events entail are noticeably lacking. Moreover, remarkably few efforts have been made to address the role festivals and events can play in providing visitors with learning opportunities, skills development and memorable tourism experiences; the essence of what creative tourism is about (Cloke, 2007; Lee, Wall, & Kovacs, 2015). This paper will serve to address these research gaps. Based on the initial references to it in Richards and Wilson’s (2006) paper as well as explanations that have since been given on creative tourism, this paper will first define what is meant by the term creative spectacle. This paper will then provide a survey of creative tourism experiences as they relate to various festivals and events in China’s 14 UNESCO-designated creative cities. Specifically, in order to address the dearth of research on creative tourism with regard to several specific creative sectors (e.g. architecture, design, fashion) associated with such tourism (Richards, 2014, p. 138), we investigate via travel blog analysis creative tourism experiences that are

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drawn from an array of festivals and events tied to the seven distinct resource categories (crafts & folk art, design, film, gastronomy, literature, media arts, music) used to designate UNESCO creative cities.

Furthermore, given that little empirical research has been undertaken to explore the relationship between creative tourism and creative spectacles, this paper also contributes to the growing literature on creative tourism by identifying and exploring the principal sub-dimensions of creative tourism experiences (participation, knowledge learning/self-improvement, and experiencing different cultures) as they specifically relate to creative spectacles. To date, research on creative tourism-related experiences has been confined to addressing the subject in relation to “creative spaces”, such as art districts and artist studios (Li & Kovacs, 2021). Consequently, our study will shed light on the nuances of creative tourism experiences as they relate to attendance and participation in various creative spectacles, including some that are connected to less-explored creative resource categories. Based on the research findings, this paper will conclude with recommendations for tourism managers who wish to leverage their destination’s creative resources for creative tourism development, as well as suggestions for future research.

2. Literature review

Cities play a backdrop role for festivals and events, but are also transformed, rearranged and reinvented through such spectacles (Johansson & Kociatkiewicz, 2011). On the one hand, festivals and events can serve to stimulate commercial activities, create new jobs, and increase visitation (Comunian, 2017; Gotham, 2005; Greenwood & Dwyer, 2017; Pappalepore, 2016). On the other, cultural festivals and events have become a prevalent means by which creative spaces and creative experiences are created (Johansson & Kociatkiewicz, 2011; Richards, 2011). More specifically, festivals and events can provide a spatial and temporal intensification of creativity (Richards, 2011); they allow for face-to-face encounters between people from different creative networks, which in turn can stimulate the exchange of new ideas, thus leading to knowledge generation (de Geus, Richards, & Toepoel, 2016; Podestà & Richards, 2018). Festivals and events can also positively affect the image of cities and perceptions of places within (Lu, Zhu, & Wei, 2020; Richards, 2015). Thus, some cities are purposely developing festivals and events to better integrate local creative industries with the visitor economy. The presence of such creative events, in turn, can enhance the creative atmosphere surrounding creative spaces, such as art districts and creative industry hubs, thereby helping to attract more cultural and “creative tourists” to the city (Greenwood & Dwyer, 2017; Pappalepore, 2016; Richards, 2014).

Although a number of studies have examined the links between food- (Cabras, Lorusso, & Waehning, 2020; Lee, Sung, Suh, & Zhao, 2017; Lugosi, Robinson, Walters, & Donaghy, 2020), literature- (Podestà & Richards, 2018), and crafts and folk art-centred festivals and events (Akhoondnejad, 2016) on tourism development, very few studies have specifically addressed the role of such “creative spectacles” (Richards & Wilson, 2006) in creative tourism development. Indeed, only three studies stand out in this regard, with each being limited to dealing with the topic in rural environments (Bakas, Duxbury, Remoaldo, & Matos, 2019; Cloke, 2007; Lee et al., 2015). Cloke (2007) investigated creative tourism development in the UK and New Zealand and acknowledged the important role festivals can not only play in increasing the appeal of rural areas as travel destinations, but also the importance such events can potentially have in catering to the needs of tourists in search of creative experiences. In particular, Cloke (2007) provides some examples of how such creative experiences figure in such festival events. For example, when visiting the Nine Days of Art events held in Devon county, England, tourists could not only appreciate rural art, but also learn about and make their own works of art. Likewise, the Taste of Mull and Iona Food Festival in the Marlborough region of New Zealand offered tourists opportunities to try a variety of cuisines and develop their “creative knowledge” about the local food culture (Cloke, 2007).

Lee et al. (2015) documented the creative tourism experiences of tourists visiting a food festival in an agricultural region in Ontario, Canada. Their findings similarly revealed that the festival not only enabled creative tourists to taste a variety of dishes from the local cuisine, but also afforded them the opportunity to learn the processes involved in the making of local food products. More recently, Bakas et al. (2019) offered practical evidence of creative tourism experiences associated with tourists visiting four small-scale art festivals in Portugal. When visiting the festivals, tourists could passively appreciate art exhibitions and local architecture, as well as actively participate in workshops related to various creative resource categories, including crafts and folk art (painting, wood sculpture, and mosaic-making), design (graphic design), gastronomy (making local cuisine), and music (playing traditional musical instruments).

Apart from the limited number of papers on the subject, another issue that warrants further attention is the meaning behind the term creative spectacle in the context of such experiential travel. Richards and Wilson (2006, p.1216) explain this term in their formative paper on creative tourism as involving “[i]ndividuals or groups undertaking creative and innovative activities which then form the basis of more passive tourist experiences (i.e. production of creative experiences for passive consumption by tourists)”; they also noted that art festivals and travelling art exhibitions could be regarded as examples of creative spectacles. For example, in reference to festivals as creative spectacles they note, “Many major arts festivals have effectively become what we might term creative spectacles”, and subsequently explain that “to hold audience attention” [...] “new and innovative elements [need to be introduced into festivals]” (Richards & Wilson, 2006, p. 1217). Furthermore, in a later reference to creative spectacles they emphasise what distinguishes creative tourism from traditional cultural tourism: “creative tourism depends far more on the active involvement of tourists. Creative tourism involves not just spectating, nor just ‘being there’, but reflexive interaction on the part of tourists” [...] “In creative tourism, the onus is on the tourists themselves to actively learn about their surroundings and apply that knowledge in order to develop their own skills” (p.1218). Nonetheless, little else has been said about how creative spectacles figure in creative tourism development or what the nature of creative tourism experiences is in relation to such festivals and events. For example, although Booyens and Rogerson (2015, 2019) also use the term “creative spectacle” in their works on creative tourism in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa, and acknowledge its importance in such tourism, they do not define what they mean by it. Nonetheless, they do provide specific examples of such events, which tie into the creative industries of those two cities (e.g., arts, fashion, music).

In this paper, we define creative spectacles as festivals and events that provide the tourist with an opportunity to acquire new knowledge and experience different cultures and local life through participative activities. Such creative spectacles are associated with the various creative industry sectors of a city. This definition matches the many explanations that have been given on creative tourism; in particular, it fits the general understanding that creative tourism entails “travel directed toward an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of place, and it provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 3). Our definition similarly captures the essence of Duxbury, Silva, and de Castro’s (2019, p.295) more recent explanation of creative tourism which sees it as “sustainable small-scale tourism that provides a genuine visitor experience by combining an immersion in local culture with a learning and creative process.” Using such explanations (Duxbury, Silva, & de Castro, 2019; UNESCO, 2006), as well as our specific definition of creative spectacles as a basis, this paper will aim to shed further light on the nature of creative spectacles as a component of creative tourism. In particular, this paper will reveal the practical connections between creative tourism experiences and creative spectacles through quantitative and qualitative analyses of recorded visitor experiences tied to festivals and events in China’s

UNESCO-designated creative cities.

3. Method

3.1. Data collection

Despite a growing volume of research on creative tourism, few efforts (Li & Kovacs, 2021) have been made to utilise social media data to better understand this growing niche area of tourism. This is surprising given the fact that social media is recognised as an important source of information in terms of travel experience sharing, information exchange, and destination branding (McCartney & Pek, 2018; OECD, 2014). Travel blogs, in particular, have been acknowledged as a useful source of research data due to the fact that the information provided is typically freely accessible to the researcher, provides a large amount of potential data to analyse, and captures the motivations, perceptions, and opinions of tourists who reflect upon their travel experiences (Bosangit, Dulnuan, & Mena, 2012; Jeuring & Peters, 2013).

In order to investigate the practical connections between creative tourism experiences and creative spectacles, travel blog data was collected for analysis. Data collection was centred on travel blogs capturing visits to China's 14 UNESCO-designated creative cities. These cities include cities of crafts and folk art (Hangzhou, Jingdezhen, Suzhou), design (Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Wuhan), film (Qingdao), gastronomy (Chengdu, Macao, Shunde, Yangzhou), literature (Nanjing), and media arts (Changsha). The survey of creative spectacles within each city focused on festivals and events related to official UNESCO creative resource categories (as applied to the designation of UNESCO creative cities): crafts and folk art, design, film, gastronomy, literature, media art, and music. A search for travel blogs pertaining to creative spectacles in these cities was conducted in four popular travel experience sharing platforms: Mafengwo (<http://www.mafengwo.cn>), Sina Travel (<http://blog.sina.com.cn/lm/travel/>), Tuniu Trip (<https://trips.tuniu.com>), and Jianshu (<https://www.jianshu.com>). The searching process was divided into two steps. The first step involved searching for the keywords “events/festivals AND city name” in the search engine of the four travel blog platforms. Travel blogs recording festivals and events not related to UNESCO's seven creative resource categories were excluded from the data collection (e.g., a local fruit harvesting event), as were blogs that did not reveal the traveller's personal feelings towards their travel experience; blogs that contained pictures but no text; and blogs that did not record any activities (e.g., ceramic making) related to creative tourism experiences. In total, 144 travel blogs were collected for analysis. The second step involved searching for specific signature festivals and events in each city. Information about creative festivals and events was gathered from the tourism division homepage and/or creative city websites of each city (e.g., <https://www.gastronomy.gov.mo/>). In total, 39 creative festivals and events were identified (see Appendix A1). These creative spectacles were then individually searched for within the four travel blog sites, and a total of 185 additional travel blog entries were collected. In total, 329 travel blogs relating to creative spectacles and written between April 11, 2017 and April 5, 2020 were collected from the four travel blog platforms.

3.2. Data analysis

Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) was conducted on travel blogs using Nvivo software. Nvivo has been widely applied in the analysis of travel blogs (Bosangit et al., 2012; McCartney & Pek, 2018) since it enables researchers to efficiently manage, query, and visualise data and ideas (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). For data analysis, all collected travel blogs pertaining to China's 14 creative cities were arranged into 14 separate Word files. After these files were input into Nvivo, the 14 cities were identified as cases for analysis. Cases are a unit of analysis in Nvivo which “unites all the different components of qualitative and quantitative data [pertaining] to an entity in one place”

(Jackson & Bazeley, 2019, p. 47).

Classification of cases is the first step to manage and code collected qualitative data. The coding process was divided into two steps, with the first being open coding. Since the research question is to investigate the practical connections between seven types of creative resources as they relate to creative spectacles and creative tourism experiences, seven main codes (level 1 codes) were named: crafts & folk art, design, film, gastronomy, literature, media art, and music. All content relating to creative activities and experiences associated with these seven categories of creative spectacles were subsequently inter-coded to each main code. The second step involved axial coding, for which the coded contents of each main code were separately printed out for further analysis. Theoretically derived coding methods were applied to subsequently group codes to create specific themes (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). Although there are a large number of studies that offer a diverse range of definitions, activities, and experiences, the common features of creative tourism that are derived from an extensive review of this literature were categorised in this study as “participate in creative activities”, “learn new knowledge”, and “experience local life” (Duxbury & Richards, 2019; Richards, 2014). While using these three features as points of reference, the printed out content of the main codes were repeatedly read to create subcodes (also level 2 codes). A cross-case analysis was then conducted using the framework matrix functions of Nvivo (see Jackson & Bazeley, 2019) to visualise the axial coding results; cases (14 creative cities) occupied the rows, subcodes occupied the columns, and intersecting content between cases and subcodes were located in the cells. After repeatedly comparing and contrasting the intersecting contents, all subcodes were grouped into specific themes. During the axial coding process, a word frequency query was conducted in Nvivo to identify recurrently used keywords in travel blogs; the recurrently used keywords serve to reveal what tourists cared about and what kinds of creative activities and experiences they were interested in or had partaken in during their travel. This analysis offered auxiliary information for creating themes to further analyse. Finally, after finishing the coding process, the number of coding references related to different creative spectacles and creative cities were quantitatively compared using the matrix query function of Nvivo.

4. Findings

4.1. Statistical analysis

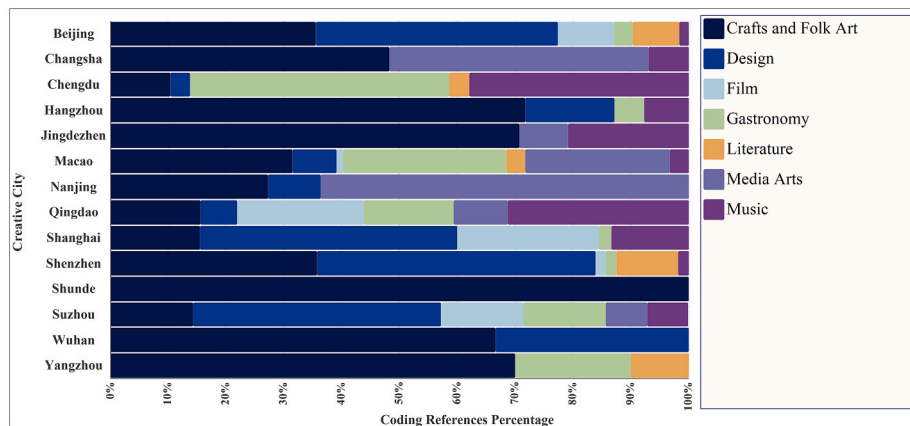
The results of the statistical analyses are charted from Fig. 1 to Fig. 2. (also see Appendix A2 to A4). Fig. 1 presents the word cloud of analysed travel blogs based on word frequency. “Art (艺术)” and “design (设计)” are identified as the most recurrently used keywords, which ranked first and second in weighted percentage of coverage (0.87%, 0.62%) and in frequency count (231, 166). “Culture (文化)” and “performance (表演)” are additional words that conspicuously appear in the word cloud, accounting for 0.50% and 0.49% respectively in the weighted percentage coverage from the collected dataset. Additionally, “Macao (澳门)” (0.45%) is the city most frequently mentioned in the travel blogs. Words including “exhibition (展览)” (0.33%), “creativity (创意)” (0.27%), “theme (主题)” (0.24%), and “display (展示)” (0.23%) also appeared in high frequency. In considering UNESCO's creative resource categories, a number of words that are associated with each emerged from the word frequency query analysis. These words, which represent the tourist's memorised experiences in the travel destination, include “tradition (传统)” (0.23%), “history (历史)” (0.21%) and “artist (艺术家)” (0.18%) which are associated with crafts and folk art, “designer (设计师)” (0.15%) which is linked to design, “gourmet (美食)” (0.27%) and “Sichuan cuisine (川菜)” (0.24%) which are connected to gastronomy, “fireworks (烟花)” (0.24%), “light (灯光)” (0.17%), and “technology (科技)” (0.17%) which are related to media arts, and finally “film (电影)” (0.39%) and “music (音乐)” (0.20%). In addition, keywords related to travel experiences, including “experience (体验)” (0.36%), “life (生活)”



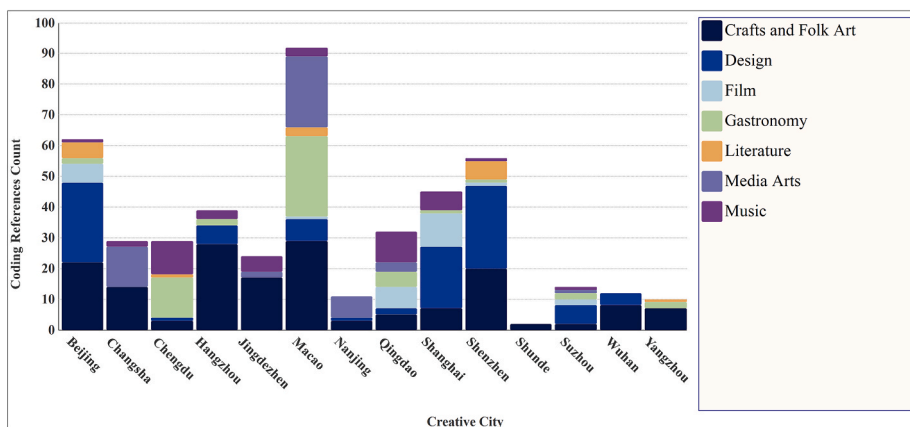
Fig. 1. Word cloud of collected travel blogs based on a word frequency query using Nvivo software. a. Coding reference percentages within cities. b. Coding reference counts between cities.

(0.29%), “scene (现场)” (0.25%), “activity (活动)” (0.24%), “genuineness (真)” (0.23%), “difference (不同)” (0.22%) and “new (新)” (0.19%) also showed high word frequency. All of these findings are indicative of the fact that creative tourists seek out opportunities to participate in creative activities during travel, they enjoy experiencing genuine and diverse local life, and they appreciate the chance to gain new knowledge (see Appendix A2).

Fig. 2. (a) reveals the coding reference percentages of different creative resources within the 14 creative cities in China. As evident, crafts and folk art as well as design are features of high interest for tourists in most of the cities examined. For example, the coding references of crafts and folk art in the travel blogs account for over half of the total coding references within 5 of the 14 cities and over 25% of the coding references within 10 of the 14 cities (see Appendix A3). Crafts and folk art-related events are features of especially great interest compared to other creative resources in the cities of Shunde (100%), Hangzhou (71.79%), Jingdezhen (70.83%), Yangzhou (70%), Wuhan (66.67%), Changsha (48.28%), and Macao (31.52%). Design-related festivals and events not surprisingly show the highest attractiveness in the three creative cities of design, with the coding references for that creative resource accounting for 48.21% (Shenzhen), 44.44% (Shanghai), and 41.94% (Beijing) of the total coding references for each of those cities. Coding references for gastronomy account for over 14% of the total coding references within five creative cities. As expected, interest in food-related festivals and events are especially high for tourists visiting the four official creative cities of gastronomy. For example, food-related festivals and events are the most attractive creative spectacles for tourists visiting Chengdu (44.83%) in comparison to other creative



a. Coding reference percentages within cities



b. Coding reference counts between cities

Fig. 2. Coding reference percentages (a) and counts (b) of specific creative resources.

resource-related events. This finding is consistent with the recurrently used keyword “Sichuan cuisine” that appeared in travel blogs pertaining to visits to that city. Similarly, media arts-related festivals and events showed great popularity in Changsha (44.83%) – a creative city of media arts – while film-related spectacles are highly attractive in Qingdao (21.88%), which is officially designated as a creative city of film. Interestingly, crafts and folk art-related festivals and events are the most attractive creative resource feature in Yangzhou (70%) despite its designation as a creative city of gastronomy. Similarly, tourists to Nanjing – a creative city of literature – and Suzhou – a creative city of crafts and folk art – are more interested in the non-official creative resource-related spectacles that are tied to media arts and design respectively (see Appendix A3).

Fig. 2. (b) presents the differences in coding reference counts (457 total) between the 14 creative cities. It is apparent that creative spectacles are highly attractive features for Chinese tourists in Macao, Beijing, Shenzhen, and Shanghai for which there are 92, 62, 56, and 45 coding references respectfully in the travel blogs pertaining to those four cities. Conversely, there are only two coding references in Shunde and 10 coding references in Yangzhou, which indicates the lower attractiveness of creative spectacles in those cities. What is also evident is that crafts and folk art ranks first with 167 coding references. This implies that tourists are highly interested in crafts and folk art-related events when visiting creative cities. It is also evident that design- and gastronomy-related creative spectacles are of great interest to tourists with 100 and 54 coding references respectively. In contrast, there are only 28 coding references for film and 16 for literature, which indicates the relatively lower attractiveness of these creative resource-related

festivals and events (see Appendix A4). While the relative attractiveness of creative spectacles by creative resource type in China’s UNESCO-designated creative cities has been shown in this section through CAQDA, the next section will reveal the practical nexus between the seven creative resource-related creative spectacles and creative tourism experiences through further travel blog analysis. In particular, practical examples of creative spectacles and creative tourism will be revealed, and the nature of creative tourism experiences will be explored.

4.2. Creative tourism experience

Table 1 presents practical evidence from the analysed travel blogs of the nexus between creative spectacles and creative tourism. Three significant themes (participation, knowledge learning/self-improvement, experiencing diverse cultures) that underscore the relationship between the two as revealed from our analysis are used to frame an array of examples of such tourism that are specifically tied to festivals and events in China’s UNESCO-designated creative cities.

4.2.1. Participation

Our research revealed that Chinese tourists are highly interested in participative activities when attending festivals and events relating to crafts and folk art, design, film, gastronomy, literature, and music. In addition, it was evident from our research that the growing application of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies has expanded the possibilities for tourists to actively take part in creative spectacles, like exhibitions and fashion shows. For example, VR technology has enabled tourists visiting the Van Gogh Art Exhibition in

Table 1
Practical evidence of participation, knowledge learning/self-improvement, and experiencing diversified cultures by different creative resource categories.

Creative resources	Participation	Knowledge learning/self-improvement	Experiencing diversified culture
Crafts & folk art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entering into paintings through VR technology: Van Gogh Art Exhibition, Hangzhou - Volunteering at a creative flea market: Six Nine Flea Market, Hangzhou 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaining knowledge about handmade shoes: China Centennial Footwear Exhibition, Beijing - Acquiring inspiration from art by interacting with artists: Creative Flea Market, Jingdezhen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciating arts work from west and east: Art Macao Exhibition, Macao - Appreciating ceramic artworks from international artists: Flea market of Ceramic Art Avenue, Jingdezhen
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being a part of three-dimensional installation art: “All We Love” Art Exhibition, Beijing - Experiencing new design works (e.g., furniture, tableware): Beijing Design Week; Shenzhen Design Week - Trying on new fashion designs through VR technology: Artron Art Exhibition, Shenzhen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquiring inspirational teachings on life from artists: International Cultural Industry Fair, Shenzhen - Acquiring inspiration from art: Beijing Design Week; Shanghai Design Week - Learning the practical everyday applications of design: Shenzhen Design Week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciating artworks from different fields of design: International Art Design Exhibition, Shenzhen; Beijing Design Week - Appreciating fashion heritage from countries affiliated with the Maritime Silk Road initiative: Beijing Design Week - Experiencing global fashion trends: Shenzhen Fashion Week
Film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being an actor in a film through VR/AR technology: Beijing International Film Festival - Experiencing film shooting: Shanghai International Film Festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning the history and production of the film: Beijing International Film Festival; Shanghai International Film Festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching films from around the world: Beijing International Film Festival; Shanghai International Film Festival; The International Film Festival and Awards, Macao
Gastronomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making Sichuan cuisine: Chengdu Gourmet & Tour Festival - Making Yangzhou cuisine: Yangzhou Food Festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning the history of the Tsingtao brewery: Qingdao International Beer Festival - Learning the food heritage of Sichuan: Chengdu Panda Asian Food Festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experiencing the tea culture of different countries: Rice Paddy Art Festival, Hangzhou - Tasting a variety of foods/beers from around the world: Macao Food Festival, German Beer Festival, Macao; Qingdao International Beer Festival
Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participating in book sharing activities: Meet The Writers, Shenzhen - Writing calligraphy in the Forbidden City through VR technology: Artron Art Exhibition, Shenzhen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciating Chinese font design: Xubing Font Design Exhibition, Beijing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experiencing differently designed reading rooms by Asian country: Artron Art Exhibition, Shenzhen - Appreciating historical book collections: Book Exhibition of Liangyou Bookstore, Qingdao
Media arts		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning the process behind the molten iron splashing performance: Orange Isle Fireworks Show, Changsha - Acquiring inspiration of life from fireworks show: Macao International Fireworks Display Contest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciating firework shows choreographed by professionals from around the world: Macao International Fireworks Display Contest - Appreciating light shows depicting landscapes and architecture from China and Portugal: Macao Light Festival
Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interacting with actors during a living theatre performance: Fuerza Bruta, Macao 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning the history and playing methods of porcelain music: Porcelain Music Show, Jingdezhen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciating music delivered by different singers: Phoenix Music Festival, Qingdao - Appreciating different instrument performances: West Coast Music Festival, Qingdao

Hangzhou to immerse themselves into some of the famous artist's most admired paintings; thus, rather than simply appreciating the painting through observation, they could experience being part of a world-famous work of art. Similarly, when visiting the Artron Art Exhibition in Shenzhen, tourists could not only appreciate the exhibition of fashion heritage in a passive way but also actively try on different dresses virtually through VR technology. In some cases, both VR and AR technologies are combined as revealed in one case from the Beijing International Film Festival:

When we came to the movie festival, there were so many interactive ways that allowed us to realise our dreams of becoming a film actor and to experience different movie scenes through VR and AR technology. You can choose a character and set a plot within blockbuster movies like *Pirates of the Caribbean* and make your own personalised film. The beauty of sound, light, and shadow gave us an extraordinary experience.

Tourists also participate in creative spectacles through their interactions with artists, musicians and other creative individuals (hereafter members of the "creative class"). In some cases, the interactions are a central component of the tourism offering. For example, when tourists visited the Kunqu Art Festival (Hangzhou) which celebrates Kunqu opera, they were surprised to find no stationary seats or even traditional stage; instead, the tourists were actively encouraged to interact with the performing artists in singing and dancing throughout the performance. This opportunity undoubtedly gave the tourists a more memorable experience than they would have obtained from simply watching a traditional performance of the same opera. One tourist's travel blog captured the creative way in which the distance between performer and audience members was lessened:

One of the purposes of coming to Macao is to watch the performance of *Fuerza Bruta Wayra*. It is an integrated theatre with elements of a party that breaks down the boundary between the stage performers and the audience. During the performance, you can speak loudly, walk around freely, record videos, and interact with the performers as much as you'd like. There are performers who seem to be around you in all directions at all times, which makes you feel like you're becoming part of the performance.

In addition to such interactive experiences, tourists may also gain a deeper experience in creative spectacles by volunteering in them. The "voluntourists" acquired a special opportunity to see all creative handicrafts and performances on display during their work. In addition, participation as volunteers gave such creative tourists an opportunity to more closely interact with participating artists. Many such tourists noted the very memorable experiences they had gained as volunteers. In particular, one underlying theme that surfaced in many travel blogs was how the opportunity to partake in work at the creative spectacle allowed them to develop new friendships with artists and fellow tourists:

There are almost too many things to enjoy during Westlake Street Art Day. I chose to focus my time on the performances and the various creative handicrafts [rather than spending time at the marketplace]. I felt like I was in a very innovative and creative atmosphere. The streets had an international feel to them. There was a band from Morocco, and two foreign singers performed songs in English. As I want to travel abroad, this event gave me the experience in advance. The opportunity to act as a volunteer allowed me to experience a very diverse atmosphere. I was also able to talk to some artists, and I made new friends who share the same interests and hobbies as me.

4.2.2. Knowledge learning/self-improvement

Festivals and events provide an opportunity for physical encounters to occur between members of the creative class and creative tourists. Such interactions in turn may promote creativity and new ideas among

artists, musicians and other creative types (Podestà & Richards, 2018). Likewise, the creative tourist may gain new knowledge by attending exhibitions and other such events through various means, including passively appreciating displayed artworks and performances as well as by actively interacting with members of the creative class who are participating at these events. When visiting creative spectacles, tourists can learn the history and processes involved in crafts and folk art, fashion, film, and food heritage (see Table 1). For example, when tourists visited the China Centennial Footwear Exhibition in Beijing, they could learn the history of traditional footwear and also acquire literary knowledge (e.g., ancient poems) related to the exhibited shoe crafts:

I wish to thank the exhibition organisers for providing us with such a great opportunity to trace the history of footwear crafts. A variety of information was provided at the exhibition, including literary history relating to the shoes on display. Each pair of traditional shoes on display indicates a trail of handwork, and every stitch and thread embodies the painstaking efforts of the craftspeople. All kinds of shoes from small to large represent the living memory of different generations.

When visiting such creative spectacles, tourists may also gain opportunities for self-improvement. For example, they may obtain inspiration from what they have seen and learned about from exhibits and performances held during the event; additionally, they may become inspired by what they have learned directly through their interactions with artists, filmmakers, writers, and others. Aside from learning opportunities, visits to festivals and events may also contribute to the tourist's sense of self-improvement. That is, they may draw inspiration and become reinvigorated in their thinking from what they see and learn about at the creative spectacle. For example, a tourist may gain a new appreciation for something once taken for granted:

My knowledge of design has increased [since attending the Beijing Design Week exhibition]. Design is part of our everyday daily lives. We cannot live without design since our clothes, food, houses, and cars all contain aspects of the ingenuity of designers. The design promotes human cognition of life and advances the development of society. This design trip allowed ordinary people like myself to gain greater inspiration from design; to appreciate the joy of life that it brings us.

An event may also prompt the tourist to think about people's behaviours as well as other things they may not have spent as much time thinking about before. For example, the following extract from a travel blog reveals how a particular artwork on display at an art exhibition left the individual thinking more deeply about the meaning that may be embodied in a work of art, the great effort that can consequently go into its creation, as well as the fragility of very meaningful and difficultly produced artistic expressions:

In the exhibition, there are many glass artworks related to different themes. Many tourists were impressed but also felt regret about one of the artworks, which is named "snap." It was an artwork created by an artist to commemorate the birth of his daughter. It took him two years to complete. However, when it was finally exhibited, a child in the exhibition shook it, and it broke. The mother was taking pictures nearby and did not stop her child's bad behaviour in time. The destroyed artwork is still being exhibited in its damaged state since it cannot be repaired. At the same time, footage that recorded the moment of the work's destruction is shown on a monitor next to the artwork. I really hope everyone can see this exhibition. I hope they will then show greater care around artworks.

Interactions with artists also enable the tourist to learn the hidden background stories behind the works on display; the new knowledge, in turn, may contribute to the tourist's new-found appreciation for the

meaning of the artwork. Still, others may gain inspiration from the ideas conveyed at an event. For example, the comments in the travel blog of a tourist who attended a public lecture at the Israel Art Exhibition (Shenzhen) captures how inspiring the talk was:

We discussed with the artist how Israeli culture, geography, and history had impacted their artistic creations. It helped us to better understand the exhibited artworks. The Jewish culture has made a brilliant contribution to artistic creation, and it's related to that people's hard work and positive attitude towards life. Following his explanation, we began to step into the nationally treasured artworks of Israel, and we felt the visual impact [of what we saw on the screen] and the spiritual feast brought by it. David Gerstein's work is full of vitality. The different birds and animals in rich, vivid colours make us imagine what wakes him up every morning ... He immerses his life into artistic creations. It inspires us to love ordinary life and discover the beauty in life.

4.2.3. Experiencing different cultures

Richards (2011, p.1240) has noted that "As a concentrator of time and space, events form important nodes in creative networks and provid[e] a direct link between creativity and tourism." Paraphrasing Castells (2009) he goes on to note that events are important "sources of creative experiences which connect the global space of flows with the local space of places" (ibid.). More simply put, events can offer tourists a chance to interact with peoples from other places, learn about their cultures and traditions, and consequently experience a diversity of cultures beyond their own. It is evident from our analysis of travel blogs that many Chinese tourists greatly appreciate the diverse array of international artworks, films, cuisines, fireworks, and light shows, among other things, often on offer at the festivals and events they attend. For example, many visitors to the Beijing International Film Festival commented that they were highly satisfied with the event, having enjoyed films from around the world specially chosen by film professionals and festival organisers. Apart from being given a chance to see new international films, visitors also benefitted from a number of film exchange activities and lectures that provided them the opportunity to meet film directors and actors and learn the background stories and filmmaking processes behind the films being screened. Visitors to the Macao Light Festival also expressed a high level of satisfaction, with international culture similarly figuring as a key element in their enjoyment of that event. In particular, as one tourist wrote, visitors were impressed by the way in which cultural themes and landscapes from both China and Portugal were projected onto the remaining stone façade of the Ruins of Saint Paul's, a UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site:

When I arrived, the area around the Ruins of Saint Paul's was already completely surrounded by crowds of people. However, I wasn't disappointed because I could still get a wonderful panoramic view from a distance. The performance was so beautiful. Under the black night sky, dreamlike images were projected and mapped onto the

ruins. Pictures slowly scrolled across [the façade] and various cultural elements from China and Portugal unfolded before our eyes. The projected images gradually expanded across the [façade]; it seemed like life was blooming. The performance team also combined the use of traditional Chinese and Portuguese musical instruments to play modern music throughout the course of the light show.

Multicultural-themed creative spectacles, like the two above examples, enable tourists to experience different cultures through various means that are not confined to observation. In particular, when visiting such events, tourists can often participate in cultural activities while also enjoying performances showcasing cultures from around the world. For example, tourists attending the Qingdao International Beer Festival were fascinated with the opportunities to not only taste different types of beer from around the world but also the chance to enjoy the food and art performances from different countries:

I have always wanted to go to Germany to experience Oktoberfest. It is not a matter of drinking, but to experience the beer culture of that country. However, Germany is too far away for me to go. Here, I can drink a range of German and other international beer, try regional dishes from Bavaria, and enjoy the great performances by the HöglFun band. I really felt like I was in the most authentic German Oktoberfest. At this moment, I have forgotten the question of whether to drink or not. I just want to follow the warm atmosphere and toast with everyone!

In addition to experiencing aspects from different cultures, visitors to such creative events often have the opportunity to interact with members of the creative class from other nation-states as well as from other regions within their own country. For example, visitors to Hangzhou's Rice Paddy Art Festival could, in addition to appreciating the crafts exhibition and unique signature fashion show held in a rice field (see Fig. 3.), sample local foods and experience tea ceremonies from different countries, such as Japan and Malaysia, and different regions of China, such as Guangdong and Zhejiang. This festival thus shows how the combination of different creative resources during an event can expand the range of possibilities for the tourist to experience a diversity of cultures. As evident from the following travel blog extract, the presence of tea experts from different places offered the visitor with a deep experience, one that allowed them to learn about and compare and contrast the different national and regional ritualised procedures involved in the enjoyment of tea:

I first sat down at a tea table and tasted gongfu tea. There was a mild sweetness to this tea. Learning that there were tea artists from Malaysia, I approached them, and we talked about the differences between Guangdong and Malaysian gongfu teas. I then went to taste tea prepared by a tea expert from Taiwan. Her tea table was so beautiful, everything from the bowls to teapots was carefully selected for the display ... I can still smell the fragrances of the freshly harvested rice in the breeze as well as the teas that were



Fig. 3. Fashion show (left) and dance performance (right) during the Rice Paddy Art Festival in Hangzhou. Source: <http://www.mafengwo.cn/i/17621623.html> (accessed July 02, 2020).

poured from the teapots into my cup by the tea artists. I also enjoyed talking with tea artists about the beauty of nature. Their understanding of aesthetics, art and life were really interesting to me.

5. Discussion

In their pioneering paper on creative tourism, Richards and Wilson (2006) acknowledged the role of creative spectacles in providing passive creative experiences for tourists. However, very little research in the growing body of studies on creative tourism since has explored the practical nexus between creative spectacles (e.g., UNESCO-defined creative resource-related events/festivals) and creative tourism. This paper aimed to address the above research gap by identifying tangible examples of creative spectacle-centred creative tourism and revealing the nature of creative tourism experiences connected to such festivals and events. While previous studies pointed out that creative spectacles are almost always consumed by tourists in a passive way (Booyens & Rogerson, 2015, 2019; Richards & Wilson, 2006), our findings offered evidence that both passive and active activities contribute to constructing a creative tourism experience. In addition to passively appreciating an exhibition or art performance, tourists also actively participated in creative activities and interacted with members of the creative class to learn new knowledge, achieve self-improvement, and experience different cultures. Moreover, our findings revealed that the application of VR and AR technology in festivals and events enable tourists to acquire more active and interactive creative tourism experiences. This finding is consistent with the findings of Gotham (2005) and Marques and Borba (2017) who noted that technological applications enable tourists to get closer to intangible cultures and acquire more interactive experiences.

In addition, while the links between creative tourism and specific creative spaces have been documented in the literature, the similarities of and nuances between creative tourism experiences and visits to creative spaces versus creative spectacles has been much less explored. As Weidenfeld and Leask (2013) note, visitor attractions (e.g. creative spaces) are tied to specific places; consequently, they are aimed at attracting visitors over a long period of time. In contrast, being held in flexible locations during a relatively short period of time, events show seasonal variation. Due to such differences, it has been acknowledged that events should be investigated separately from visitor attractions (Connell, Page, & Meyer, 2015; Weidenfeld & Leask, 2013). Consequently, this study separately explored the practical connections between creative spectacles and creative tourism experiences. This contributed to clarifying the similarities and nuances of creative tourism experiences in creative spectacles versus those associated with creative spaces. In particular, based on the investigation of creative tourism development in specific creative spaces, previous studies identified participation in creative activities, acquisition of new knowledge, and the experiencing of local life as key features of creative tourism experiences (Chen & Chou, 2019; Dias-Sardinha, Ross, & Gomes, 2018; Li & Kovacs, 2021; Pappalepore, Maitland, & Smith, 2014; Pawlusiński & Kubal, 2018; Thimm, 2014; Wang et al., 2020; Zhang & Xie, 2019). Our findings also revealed that tourists actively participate in creative activities (e.g., making crafts at a local art festival), learn new knowledge (e.g., learning the history of film at an exhibition), and experience local life (e.g., tasting local cuisine at a food festival) when visiting creative spectacles.

Aside from the similarities, our findings also revealed some nuances between creative tourism experiences tied to creative spectacles rather than creative spaces. In addition to knowledge learning, the tourists visiting creative spectacles were often focussed on self-improvement (e.g., obtaining inspiration from artworks). Although knowledge learning has been identified as the “creative core of creative tourism” (Duxbury & Richards, 2019, p. 5), this finding contributes to extending the scope of creative tourism from learning (i.e., acquiring objective knowledge like

history and the processes involved in crafts production) to also obtaining inspiration, such as by taking in a more positive attitude of the world through the viewing of exhibited artworks or by interacting with artists and other members of the creative class. Additionally, besides experiencing local life, tourists also wish to experience the diversity of cultures through such means as appreciating various artworks, tasting different national and regional foods and drink, and interacting with artists from different countries and regions. This is consistent with the investigations of Bakas et al. (2019) who documented the intention tourists had in participating in different creative activities associated with diverse creative resource categories (crafts & folk art, design, gastronomy, and music) and in interacting with artists from an array of creative fields (architecture, photography, installation art) when visiting small-scale art festivals in Portugal. As Richards and Wilson (2006, p. 1217) noted, “festivals often compete directly with one another and therefore have to introduce new and innovative elements into their programmes in order to hold audience attention”. Our findings reveal that organisers can broaden the scope of festivals and events and consequently attract domestic and international visitors by involving artists from different countries and regions (Gotham, 2005; Pappalepore, 2016).

6. Conclusion

This paper has served to address the limited research that exists on the practical connections between creative tourism experiences and creative spectacles. CAQDA was conducted on travel blogs tied to visits to China’s 14 UNESCO-designated creative cities. The relative attractiveness of festivals and events associated with seven specific creative resources (crafts and folk art, design, film, gastronomy, literature, media arts, and music) were quantitatively compared within and between cities (see Fig. 2.). In addition, the practical nexus between the creative spectacles and creative tourism experiences were qualitatively analysed as was the nature of the travel experiences as they relate to the seven creative resource categories. Tangible examples of the three key components of creative tourism as they relate specifically to creative spectacles (participation, knowledge learning/self-improvement, and experiencing different cultures) were identified from travel blog analysis. As such, this research contributed to clarifying the nuances between creative tourism experiences as they relate to creative spectacles. A number of practical implications emerge from our findings which may be of use to tourism managers wishing to leverage their destination’s creative resources for creative tourism development.

First, this study revealed the varying attractiveness of seven creative resource-linked creative spectacles within and between cities. Destination managers need to first evaluate which type of creative resource-centred creative spectacles are most attractive for tourists and promote such festivals and events for creative tourism development. In particular, tourism planners should pay attention to avoiding the serial reproduction of creative tourism products and services. Second, this research demonstrated the practical connections between creative spectacles and creative tourism experiences with a large number of examples being presented from China’s UNESCO creative cities. Those practical examples may serve to provide tourism policymakers wishing to develop creative spectacles with ideas to develop their own creative activities, products and services tied to festivals and events. Third, this paper revealed the nuances between creative spectacles and creative spaces in terms of creative tourism experiences. As creative tourists intend to not only learn new knowledge but also achieve self-improvement when visiting creative spectacles, tourism providers should offer more opportunities for such tourists who desire to increase their creative potential and gain inspiration from the places, people and artworks they encounter during travel. In addition, since creative tourists are interested in experiencing different cultures while attending festivals and events, tourism managers should organise creative spectacles which offer more than one type of creative activity, providing tourists opportunities to interact with different types of artists from

different places. For example, as previously noted, the Rice Paddy Art Festival in Hangzhou involved several creative resources, including crafts and folk art (ceramic exhibition), design (e.g., fashion show), and food (tea ceremony, local cuisines) as well as the presence of artists from diverse regional and national origins, which in turn satisfied the desire of many tourists to experience and learn about different cultures. In addition, since creative spaces are aimed at attracting visitors over a long period of time while creative spectacles show seasonal variation, destination managers should separately investigate and implement different management plans for such spaces and events. To encourage a year-round creative tourism-centred visitor economy, tourism providers may wish to consider positioning creative spaces to attract tourists during peak seasons while holding creative festivals and events in off-seasons.

Finally, although this study contributed to extending knowledge about the scope of creative tourism experience by identifying practical connections between creative spectacles and such tourism, there are some limitations that should be pointed out. First, since this study analysed tourist experiences based on an examination of online travel blogs, it does not capture the experiences of visitors who did not record their travel experiences using social media for the benefit of other tourists. Therefore, researchers should consider conducting field research and on-site investigations at specific creative spectacles in the future. Second, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of creative spectacles (e.g. fashion shows, film festivals) had to be held online, consequently dampening the potential creative tourism experience of the attendees of those events. However, given that this study also identified examples in which technological applications provided the tourist with more interactive and diverse experiences, future research should consider how creative tourism products and services might be provided online for the virtual creative tourist.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2021.08.023>.

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