EFFECTIVENESS CRITERIA FOR ICONS AS TOURIST ATTRACTIONS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA

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ABSTRACT. As the application of human icons as tourist attractions continues to increase, there is a growing need to better understand how these famous individuals are used by destinations. Based on literature in several relevant fields, such as history, social science, and destination management, effectiveness criteria for icon attractions were analyzed in this study. Three "situational" factors influencing the operation of icon attractions (culture, history, and government involvement) were included in these criteria. It also suggested that icon attractions can be evaluated from three aspects: characteristics of icons, organization, and impacts. The applications of icon effectiveness criteria for tourist attractions in the United States and China were compared. The validity and practical value of the effectiveness criteria were demonstrated. Management implications in the utilization of icon attractions were derived.

KEYWORDS. Famous individuals, icon attractions, effectiveness criteria, comparative study

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INTRODUCTION

If you dust off your old reference books and look up the word "icon," you will discover that synonyms include "symbol" and "representation." The icons used in this study refer to famous individuals, who have become heroes or heroines in their fields. Human society has already several thousands of years of history. In this long process, numerous heroes and heroines have enriched history. Their life stories afford much food for thought and the places where they left footmarks have become special tourist resources and potential attractions. Some famous icons and their related tourist attractions include: William J. Clinton in the Presidential Center and Park in Little Rock, Arkansas in the United States; Alexandre Dumas in Fife Island, Marseille in France; and Zedong Mao in Shaoshan, Hunan in China.

Although celebrities have been employed as special tourist resources and potential attractions for many years, the academic research focusing on this theme is minimal. Pearce, Morrison, and Moscardo (2003) first defined famous individuals in their respective fields of human achievement as "icons" and their discussion centered on the tourism potential of icons. This qualitative study presented the stages of icon attraction development and marketing, and identified a number of important issues regarding the use of individuals as tourist icons. However, industry practitioners, who look to the literature for practical guidance on effectively employing icons as tourist attractions, will find scant information therein. Having a set of effectiveness criteria for icons is particularly desirable for assessing existing and potential new attractions of this type. Various researchers have already recognized that the generation of icons and their acceptance by the public are closely associated with local history, culture, and governmental involvement in tourism (Jafari, 1987; Kalven, 1988; Katz & Lee, 1992). However, important practical questions remain unanswered. For example, do these factors also influence the operation of destinations when icons are employed as tourist attractions? Is this influence obvious and measurable? What aspects of the performance of destinations are affected? To answer these questions and others, this research study compared the experiences in using icon attractions within destinations in the United States and China. These two countries were chosen for comparison because they potentially demonstrate nearly two opposites in the three situational factors of history, culture, and governmental involvement in tourism. The United States is a young country with cultural values of low power distance and high individualism. China has a 5000-year history and values high power distance and low individualism. The United States supports broad freedom of expression and investment liberalization, which is contrary to the situation within China. It was expected that this comparative analysis might highlight some potential "rules of the game" and effectiveness criteria when employing icons as attractions under different situational conditions. In addition, it was assumed that the research findings would improve the understanding of alternative strategies in different nations and promote the sharing of successful experiences among destination countries. The specific objectives of this research study were to:

1. Suggest criteria for measuring the effectiveness of human icons as tourism attractions.
2. Test and compare the utilization of effectiveness criteria for icons as tourist attractions in destinations within the United States and China.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Utilization of Icons in Subfields of Tourism

Before Pearce and colleagues (2003) put forward the terminology of "icon attractions," scattered discussion on the roles of celebrities in tourism had already been emerging in

several subfields of literary, film, and heritage tourism. In the cases of literary tourism, writers have been acclaimed as great personalities who attract tourists. People visit writer-related heritage sites to track footmarks they left, seeking inspiration or addendum to their reading (Robinson & Andersen, 2004). A good example is "Gulliver's Travels" written by Jonathan Swift. It described the four fantastic voyages of Lemuel Gulliver, which are narratives of vivid imagination. The fantasy element of Liliput now has a physical presence in three theme parks in the United Kingdom and one in Japan. Children visiting these theme parks now have the opportunities to experience the adventure voyages of their icon Guilver (Robinson, 1992). In film tourism, a favorite performer works as impetus to attract tourists, together with other factors in the movie, including a movie's symbolic content, a single event, a location's physical features, and a theme (Beeton, 2001, 2005; Busby & Klug, 2001; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006; Riley, Baker, & Doren, 1998). Good examples of famous performers, popular movies, and their related locations include: Sophie Marceau—Brave Heart—Scotland; Elizabeth Taylor—Little Women—Massachusetts, United States and British Columbia, Canada; and Vivian Mary Hartley—Gone with the Wind—Virginia, United States (Riley et al., 1998).

The discussion of individuals in literary and film tourism refers to different types of icons; whereas the celebrities in heritage tourism focus on the eras of icons, especially historical and modern eras. In heritage tourism research, such frequent expressions as the "home of," "birthplace of," and "monument to" attest to the close relationships between famous individuals and specific places. The discussion of iconic personalities both historical and modern is familiar theme in the literature of China tourism (Denton, 2005; Lai, 2004; Li, 2003; Yin, Zhu, & Gan, 2005). Yamashita, Din, and Eades (1997) examined the development of tourism in Mao Zedong (leader of the Communist Party of China)'s home village of Shaoshan. It described the influx of tourists over the years, and analyzed how

villagers "changed a sacred revolutionary memorial into a multipurpose tourist attraction by exploiting Mao." Other examples of Chinese celebrities used as tourist attractions include Zhou Enlai (first premier of the People's Republic of China) in Huai An (Zhang, 2001), Wang Zhao Jun (the best-known "political bride" in China) in Guan Xing (Cao, Hu, Liu, & Sun, 2004), and Confucius (Chinese social philosopher) in Qu Fu (Ying, 2001).

Although the role of well-known figures has been acknowledged in the tourism literature, these discussions tend to peripheral, often occurring alongside with or in the context of other tourist attractions. As a result, the unique contribution of iconic individuals is well understood. Pearce and colleagues (2003) proposed the term of "icons" to refer to the heroes or heroines in a certain field. In their pioneering effort, the authors focused on the potential of individuals as tourist attractions. They extracted the individuals-related parts in different subfields of tourism, and reviewed the roles of icons as the basis for developing and marketing tourism destinations. Their study could be treated as an avant-courier of the tourist icon topic.

The Influence of Culture on Icon Choice

Culture can be explained as variations among groups of people who do things differently and observe the world differently (Cheng, 2001). Cultural differences not only affect tourist behavior, but also influence the marketing and development strategies of destinations (Jafari, 1987). Among several frameworks proposed for assessing differences in cultural values (e.g., Schwartz, 1992; Triandis, 1995; Rose, 1997), Hofstede's (1983, 1984) cultural framework and classification of countries have been widely referenced in marketing and social sciences (Alden, Hoyer, & Lee, 1993; Atuahene-Gima & Li, 2002; Roth, 1995; Wang, 2005; Xu, 2006). Its practical value to the tourism industry was also validated in Mill and Morrison (2006). Hofstede's (1984) culture

framework included four dimensions: power-distance, uncertainty-avoidance, individualism, and masculinity. He classified over 50 countries into eight specific culture clusters. The United States and China, respectively, belonged to the *Anglo* and *less developed Asian* groups. The main differences in the two groups were their value patterns in power distance and individualism. In this research study, it was predicted that the differences in these two value patterns would influence the choices of types of icons employed as tourist attractions.

Power Distance

Power distance is a measurement of interpersonal power or influence between a superior and a subordinate (Hofstede, 1985). Individuals with higher levels of power distance are more likely to accept the inequality of power between superiors and subordinates, and deem that superiors are entitled to distinctive privileges (Hofstede, 1983). Contrary to the United States, China is believed to respect and uphold high power distance (Hofstede, 1984). This might explain why the Chinese have a great admiration for fixed hierarchical relationships. Much of these deep-seated beliefs on hierarchy can be traced to the teachings of Confucius, who spoke of the *Five Constant Relationships*—those between parent and child; elder and younger siblings; husband and wife; elder and junior friends; and ruler and subject (Liu, 2002; Skinner, 1977; Xiao, 2004). This cultural value has been passed down from generation to generation in China for thousands of years (Chu & Ju, 1993; Peng, 2006). It partially explains why historical figures or icons are more highly respected in China than modern and contemporary celebrities.

Individualism

In individualist cultures, distinctiveness and autonomy are more appreciated. The society esteems people who show initiative or work well independently. Collectivism, in contrast, is marked by closely linked individuals who are inclined to give priority to the interests of their in-group before their own (Earley & Gibson, 1998; Triandis, 1995). Chan (1986), Ho (1979), and Qin (2005) showed that a primary distinction between the U.S. and Chinese cultures is the difference in the individualism-collectivism dimension. The U.S. society is acknowledged for its rugged individualism, and the acceptance for individuals to separate themselves from others and the group (Spence, 1985). China, conversely, has stressed the importance of family, social benefits, and collective actions, while devaluing personal goals and achievements (Li, 1978; Oh, 1976; Qin). The cultural difference between the two nations is also reflected in the adoration of idols. For example, as outstanding members of teams, individual sports stars get more attention and appreciation from the U.S. public. In contrast, the Chinese prefer to remember the team or team name, rather than the individuals within the team.

Taken as a whole, the overall culture of a society appears to directly affect the icons esteemed by the public. Furthermore, culture may have an effect on the types of individual icons that are selected as tourist attractions. Therefore, the overall culture of a society is proposed as a situational factor in the conceptual model of effectiveness criteria for icons as tourist attractions (Figure 1).

The Influence of History on Icon Choice

Like culture, history may also have some impact on human icon generation and admiration in a society. Rapid development in a short period of time helps explain why variation and novelty are highly valued in U.S. society (Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Messner & Rosenfeld, 1994). The history of innovation has dictated that celebrities successfully breaking old norms and conventions, reforming, and innovating in their fields are readily accepted by the public as icons in the United States (Torres, 2004). The "open mind" also helps to explain the diversity of human icons in the United States (Frith & Wesson, 1991; Katz & Lee, 1992).
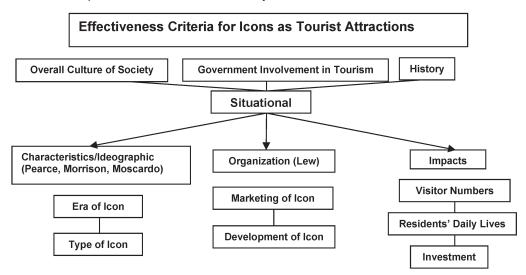
FIGURE 1. Conceptual Framework for the Study

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        Effectiveness Criteria for Icons as Tourist Attractions    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────────────┐  ┌──────────┐
│ Overall Culture of   │  │ Government Involvement in     │  │ History  │
│ Society              │  │ Tourism                      │  │          │
└──────────────────────┘  └──────────────────────────────┘  └──────────┘

                        ┌──────────────┐
                        │  Situational │
                        └──────────────┘

┌──────────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
│ Characteristics/         │  │ Organization (Lew)   │  │   Impacts    │
│ Ideographic (Pearce,     │  │                      │  │              │
│ Morrison, Moscardo)      │  │                      │  │              │
└──────────────────────────┘  └──────────────────────┘  └──────────────┘
                                                          ┌──────────────┐
┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐   │Visitor Numbers│
│    Era of Icon       │      │  Marketing of Icon   │   └──────────────┘
└──────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────┘   ┌────────────────┐
                                                          │Residents' Daily│
┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐   │     Lives      │
│    Type of Icon      │      │ Development of Icon  │   └────────────────┘
└──────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────┘   ┌──────────────┐
                                                          │  Investment  │
                                                          └──────────────┘
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In stark contrast to the United States, China has a long 5,000-year history. It has experienced primitive, slave, feudalist, semi-feudalist, semicolonial, and socialist societies. Thirty-eight centuries were in slave and feudalist societies. A macro history of China is by no means just a political tract. The long and colorful history of the dynasties in China has produced many human icons in the monarchs themselves, as well as dignitaries from noble families (Huang, 1997; Jiang & Jiang, 2004; Xia, 2001). Additionally, the great admiration of literary and art figures from China's ancient times cannot be overlooked. These icons included Lao Tzu, Confucius, and Mengzi, to name but a few. They played an important role in affecting the public's opinions and attitudes toward governments and rulers in slave and feudalist societies. This role elevated these writers, artists, and philosophers to icon positions among Chinese people (Chang, 1983; Lai, 2004; Zhao, 2004).

The Influence of Government on Development of Icons as Tourism Attractions

The public's admiration of icons and whether this can be parlayed into tourist attractions may also be constrained or encouraged by government policies and directives, especially on freedom of expression. Government disposition can be directly related to tourism investment plans and programs.

Freedom of expression is the rights to freedom of "speech" and "publication/the press" (Kramer, 2002; Langton, 1990, 1993). In practice, the right to freedom of expression is not absolute in any country or cultural setting. The degree of freedom is mainly decided by the conditions of a country and government's attitudes (Baker, 1989; Du, 2001; Fish, 1994; Li & Yang, 2003). For example, the censorship of Chinese government is strict, especially with regard to some sensitive topics, such as the free Tibet movement, and Taiwan as an independent state (Congressional-Executive Commission on China [CECC], 2006; Li & Zheng, 2004; Yang, 2002b). The United States has acknowledged the importance of freedom of expression to defend democracy and grow as a nation. However, some types of speech regarded as damaging to individual interests or harmful to society as a whole are banned or restricted (Kalven, 1988; Raz, 1986; Riley, 1998; Sunstein, 1994). The different degrees of censorship and freedom of expression in China and the United States may affect the popularity and visibility of certain famous individuals. An obvious

example is the visibility accorded to criminals and antiheroes, which tends to be much greater in Western countries such as the United States.

Because the tourism industry in China is at its early stage under marketing economy, government intervention exists in tourism planning, development, and marketing. At present, the central government is still the investment dominant (Hao, 2001; Yang, 2002a; Zhang, 2002). Investment from non-public owned enterprises and foreign investors are comparatively few (Li, 2002; Liu, 2006). It is understandable that government agencies are unlikely to finance or allow private and foreign capital to invest in attractions related to criminals or antiheroes. This is a vastly different situation than in the United States, which has a long history of investment liberalization both at home and overseas (World Trade Organization, 1999; Zarsky, 1999). Funding from nontourism corporations, communities, and private grants are common investment sources in U.S. destinations (Watt, 2006). It decides the comparative flexibility of investment on attractions around such figures as Al Capone and John Dillinger. Since government's censorship on freedom of speech and investment in tourism directly affect the marketing and development of icon attractions, government involvement was included as a situational factor in the conceptual model of the effectiveness criteria for icons as tourist attractions (Figure 1).

Three Approaches to Analyze Icon Attractions

Lew (1987) suggested that three approaches exist in the study of tourist attractions: the ideographic definition and depiction of attraction categories; the organization and development of attractions; and the cognitive awareness and experience of tourists at these tourist attractions. The ideographic/characteristics perspective is identified as the uniqueness of the site. Generally, ideographic/characteristics studies of attractions classify sites according to

common themes. Pearce and colleagues (2003) classified icons into three eras: historic, modern, and contemporary. Historic icons referred to famous individuals in the 17th century or before. Modern icons were defined as well-known persons in the 18th or 19th centuries. Contemporary icons represented renowned individuals in the 20th or 21st centuries. Pearce et al. also identified more fully the categories of individuals as tourist attraction icons—including political icons, entertainers (film, music/film), sports icons, criminal/antiheroes, explorers, inventors, literary/artistic figures (poets, novelists, artists, musicians/composers), mythical figures/book characters, royalty, military figures, religious figures, and business/philanthropy icons. These classifications of icons according to eras and types were used in the questionnaire design for this study.

The second approach of Lew's (1987) tourist attraction framework—the organizational approach—identified a set of typologies and schemes that focus on the capacity and spatial organization of attractions. From the organizational perspective, the individual icon issue is located within a development and marketing framework (Pearce et al., 2003).

For the sustainable development of destinations, a suitable balance must be established among the interests of tourists, local communities, and destination operators (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Garrod & Fyall, 2000). However, overspecifying the various factors to fully reflect the concerns of all three groups would have greatly increased the complexity of this research study, especially in the information required from respondents. Therefore, only the direct and apparent impacts of icon attractions suggested by Pearce et al. (2003) were considered: visitor numbers drawn by icon attractions; effects on residents' daily lives; and scale of investment by destination operators.

Based on the literature review above, the conceptual framework for this study was established (Figure 1). This effectiveness criteria for icons as tourist attractions covered

the three situational factors and the three impacts of icon utilization as tourist attractions. The effectiveness criteria were then used as the basis for designing the survey questionnaire, and analyzing and interpreting the results of the study.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire Design

A preliminary list of questions measuring the three aspects of icon utilization as tourist attractions in the effectiveness criteria were from the research literature (Lew, 1987; Mill & Morrison, 2006; Pearce et al., 2003). Exploratory in-depth interviews were conducted with the executives from 10 randomly-chosen members of Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) in the United States. The interviews began with an evaluation of the effectiveness criteria of icons as tourist attractions, and concluded with a wide-ranging discussion on whether the preliminary list of questions could effectively measure the factors in the conceptual framework. One of the authors, bilingual in English and Chinese, used the same process with the leaders from ten 4A destinations (explained later) in China.

Then, the preliminary questionnaire was designed using the suggestions from the executives of the destinations in the United States and China. A pretest of the questionnaire was conducted by asking several tourism and marketing faculty, and graduate students to review and comment on the questions. Refinements and corrections were made accordingly. Finally, the modified English questionnaire was translated by two bilingual people whose mother language was Chinese, and then a back-translation was made by two bilingual authors whose mother language was English (Brislin, Lonner, & Thorndike, 1973). Ten Chinese graduate students were involved in the pretest of the Chinese questionnaire. This guaranteed the equivalence between the English meaning of various concepts, phrases, and even words, and that in the Chinese language. Some modifications were made as some words or phases had no exact comparable Chinese translation (Brislin, 1980).

Sampling and Survey Instrument

The goal of sample equivalence was uppermost due to the cross-cultural nature of the study (Craig & Douglas, 2000). In the United States, 521 member organizations of DMAI were chosen, after a 2-month website evaluation by the authors indicated there was a large amount of information about icon attractions. The researchers chose the 530 tourism bureaus (city and county tourism bureaus) governing 4A, 3A, 2A and A tourism destinations in China, which was announced by the National Tourism Bureau of China in 2004. The 4A, 3A, 2A and A tourism destinations are a classification based on their quality as evaluated by the National Tourism Bureau of China. The destinations are certified only when they could reach the standard on sightseeing, transportation, marketing attractiveness, and other criteria. The destination quality increases from A to 4A. Through comparison of the sample numbers, destination size, and whether icon attractions were included, the two samples in the United States and China were believed to be comparable.

The study used a web-based survey created in FrontPage 2002. In the United States, e-mail messages were sent along with the survey's website address (URL) to the members of DMAI. Respondents filled out and submitted the questionnaire online. Because e-mails on websites were either not available or were outdated, the tourism bureaus in China were telephoned and asked for the e-mail addresses of executives. If the e-mail addresses were not available, the surveys were completed by telephone.

Data Analysis

The data from multiple-choice questions were statistically analyzed by frequencies and chi-square tests with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences 11.0. One

open-ended question was also created to allow executives a chance to talk about their development projects. For the questionnaires in English collected from the U.S. destinations, CATPAC II was used to extract the words with highest frequency. Because CATPAC II and its associated programs cannot read Chinese characters, Microsoft Word was employed to check the frequency of words. Microsoft Word has the function of "replace." The frequency of meaningful words (sometimes several Chinese characters) was checked by "replace" and the words with the same and similar meanings were combined together physically. The top 25 words most frequently shown from the responses of executives in China were used for comparison with that from the responses of executives in the United States. To test whether the "replace" function in Microsoft Word produced similar results as CATPAC II, 32% of the top 25 words (eight words) from the responses to the open-ended question selected by CATPAC II were tested again by the "replace" function in Microsoft

Word. The formula used here was: Sum of the frequencies of the eight words checked by CATPAC II/Sum of the frequencies of the eight words checked by Microsoft Word). The result was 91.2%. Since the result was higher than 90%, the "replace" function in Microsoft Word could be used to substitute for CATPAC II to check the frequencies of words.

RESULTS

Characteristics of Icons as Tourist Attractions

The executives were asked what eras of icons were actually used in attracting tourists to destinations (Table 1). Because icons with different eras possibly exist in the same destination, multiple choices could be checked when executives answered the question. Among the destinations in the United States, a majority of 69.8% employed contemporary icons to attract tourists. Another

TABLE 1. Characteristics of Icons as Tourist Attractions

Eras of Icons Used in Destinations to Attract Tourists			
Eras of Icons***	United States ($n = 129$)	China ($n = 127$)	Chi-square	Sig. Level
Historic	30.2%	63.0%	18.191	0.000*
Contemporary	69.8%	40.2%	14.842	0.000*
Modern	46.0%	33.1%	3.022	0.082
Types of Icons Used in Destinations to Attract Tourists			
Types of Icons***	United States ($n = 129$)	China ($n = 127$)	Chi-square	Sig. Level
Sports	63.4%	20.3%	49.219	0.000*
Entertainers	63.4%	30.5%	28.108	0.000*
Criminals/antiheroes	22.1%	0.0%	31.909	0.000*
Literary/artistic figures	9.2%	48.4%	48.939	0.000*
Royalty	20.6%	43.8%	15.918	0.000*
Explorers	29.0%	13.3%	9.573	0.002*
Religious figures	21.4%	28.9%	1.954	0.162
Military figures	34.4%	30.5%	0.445	0.505
Mythical figures/book characters	38.2%	32.0%	1.070	0.301
Inventors	22.9%	25.0%	0.157	0.692
Political	40.5%	41.4%	0.024	0.877
Business/philanthropy	13.7%	14.1%	0.006	0.94

Note. ***These two questions asked multiple responses.
*$p < .01$.

46% utilized modern and 30.2% used historical icons. In contrast, some 63% of the destinations in China used historical icons, while 40.2% employed contemporary icons and 33.1% utilized modern icons as tourist attractions. The difference between the two countries was significant ($p = .000$).

As mentioned in literature review, China is a country with high power distance, which explains its appreciation on fixed hierarchical relationships. This cultural value has accumulated for 5,000 years. Celebrities from ancient times are embedded in the Chinese culture, and are more respected and admired than modern and contemporary icons. Contrary to China, the United States lacks power distance. The public pays more attention to events happening around them and the celebrities that are active today. Moreover, the longer history of China has left many heritage and cultural resources related to these historical icons, and these resources are not as plentiful in the United States.

The main differences in the types of icons employed between the United States and China were sports celebrities (63.4% versus 20.3%), entertainers (63.4% versus 30.5%), criminals/antiheroes (22.1% versus 0.0%), royalty (20.6% versus 43.8%), literary/artistic figures (9.2% versus 48.4%), and explorers (29.0% versus 13.3%). The difference in sport celebrities' use in the destinations can be explained by variation in the individualism value between the two countries. The high level of appreciation of individualism in the United States focuses the public's attention on the performance of individual sport stars, whereas the Chinese prefer to remember the name of a team rather than a specific team member.

Entertainers were also much more used by the U.S. destinations. As mentioned earlier, tourism investment sources in the United States are much more diversified. Despite the instability of the reputations of entertainers, often lowered through public scandals and other losses in popularity, investors still maintain an interest in using them as tourist attractions. The investment-dominant Chinese governments show a more conservative attitude towards employing "unstable" icons such as entertainers, in contrast to "stable" revered people from China's history.

It is interesting to note the difference in the use of criminals/antiheroes between the destinations in the two countries. As mentioned above, the Chinese government has some censorship on the freedom of expression and plays a dominant role in tourism investment ventures. These realities eliminate the possibility of employing celebrities in destinations that violate the political philosophy of the Chinese government. The United States pursues high freedom of the expression and investment liberalization in tourism, and this helps to explain the existence of criminals/antiheroes as attractions.

History as one situational factor influencing the operation of icon attractions helps explain the differences in the employment of royalty, literary/artistic figures, and explorers between the two countries. The admiration to royalty and literary/artistic figures in China has at least a 3,800-year history. The long accumulation of beliefs cannot be changed in a short time. As a young country, the United States has a much briefer history and it upholds a spirit of innovation and reform. Explorers as icons representing novelty and individualism are celebrated by the U.S. public.

Organization of Icon Attractions

Marketing of Icon Attractions

The DMO executives in China and the United States were asked their opinions about their marketing practices related to icon tourist attractions (Table 2). The first question the DMO executives discussed was the best ways to promote icons as tourist attractions. Table 1 shows that the U.S. DMO executives assigned the Internet/Web (33.1%) and visitor guides (25.4%) the top two rankings. TV/radio (14.6%) and print advertising (15.4%) were not considered as effective promotional methods for icon

TABLE 2. Marketing of Icons as Tourist Attractions

Actual Promotion Approaches Used for Icons as Tourism Attractions

	United States (n = 130)	China (n = 126)	Chi-square	df	Sig. Level
			44.72	5	0.000**
Print media advertising	15.40%	13.50%			
Internet/Web	33.10%	15.10%			
TV or radio	14.60%	50.80%			
Brochures	6.20%	7.90%			
Visitor guides	25.40%	9.50%			
Other	5.40%	3.20%			

What Has Been Done to Make Visitors Aware of the Association Between Icons and Destinations

	United States (n = 127)	China (n = 124)	Chi-square	df	Sig. Level
			13.09	4	0.011*
Agencies	16.50%	29.80%			
Outside forces, events, or organizations	7.90%	8.90%			
A combination of the two above	59.80%	54.00%			
No definite opinion on this topic	11.80%	2.40%			
Other	3.90%	4.80%			

Degree of Concern With Publicity on Icon Attractions

	United States (n = 127)	China (n = 123)	Chi-square	df	Sig. Level
			50.628	3	0.000**
Always concerned	22.00%	52.80%			
Sometimes concerned	28.30%	37.40%			
Rarely concerned	35.40%	6.50%			
Never concerned	14.20%	3.30%			

Whether to Use Individuals as Attractions if Associated With Another Place

	United States (n = 127)	China (n = 123)	Chi-square	df	Sig. Level
			9.551	2	0.008**
Yes	42.70%	59.70%			
No	22.60%	21.80%			
No definite opinion on this issue	34.70%	18.50%			

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

attractions. However, more than half of the executives of Chinese tourism bureaus deemed TV/radio (50.8%) as the best way to promote icons as tourist attractions, followed by the Internet/Web (15.1%) and print media advertising (13.5%). The results of the chi-square analysis indicated that the difference between the United States and China was significant.

In North America, the Internet has become an indispensable part of people's lives, and industry practitioners have successfully exploited this promotion tool. However, although the use of Internet has also become more extensive in China, it is still not yet believed to be an effective promotional approach for icon attractions. Meanwhile, the effectiveness of TV or radio as promotional tools has been recognized by Chinese tourism bureaus for many years. A possible reason is the lower and more affordable advertising rates in China, especially compared with that in the United States.

Second, the executives were asked "who" contributes to making visitors aware of the association between icons and destinations: the effort of the destination alone; outside forces; or a combination of the two. This question tested the involvement and partnership of several parties to build the awareness of the association between icons and destinations. In both the United States (59.8%) and China (54.0%), more than a half of the destinations acknowledged that a combined effort of destination and outside agents created the awareness of the association between icons and destinations. Both groups of executives did not attribute much of the association to only outside forces, events, or organizations (i.e., 7.9% for United States and 8.9% for China). However, a higher proportion (29.8%) of the destinations in China attributed the awareness to their own efforts than in the United States. This may indicate that cooperative efforts between Chinese tourism bureaus and external organizations are not as prevalent as in the United States.

When the DMO executives in the U.S. and Chinese destinations were asked about their degrees of concern with publicity about the icons in various media sources, the views were quite different ($p = .000$). More than half of DMAI executives were either rarely (35.4%) or sometimes (28.3%) concerned with the publicity about icons. In comparison, the DMO executives of the Chinese tourism bureaus showed a much higher level of concern with publicity related to icons (52.8% and 37.4%).

Some icons are associated with several places. This may bring promotional partnership opportunities, but there is the issue of which place really "owns" the icon. A significant difference ($p = .008$) in the DMO executives' opinions in the United States and China was found. The destinations in China (59.7% versus 42.7% in the United States) were more willing to utilize icons as attractions if they were associated with another place. However, the proportions who would not use the icons associated with other places were very similar (22.6% in

the United States and 21.8% in China). This difference is hard to explain, but the authors speculate that it may be partially due to the dissimilar stages of development of tourism in the two countries.

Development of Icon Attractions

The survey also explored the specific development projects that had been completed in the destinations to support the use of icons as attractions (Table 3). Many destinations in both the United States and China had no specific projects on icon attractions. Most of the destinations still depended on traditional physical facilities to attract tourists. From the words related to physical facilities, differences in history were evident (United States: museum and hall versus China: mausoleum and temple). The marketing of the existing icon attractions was also a discussion point here. Some interesting and innovative approaches were evident. For example, in some destinations of the United States, blogs within websites with the icons were employed; and the icons attended media events in destinations and did media interviews for the DMO. In China, specific tourist routes related to the icons across several destinations have been designed, such as "red military tourism" that utilizes celebrities of the Communist Party to commemorate revolutionary history.

Impacts of Icon Attractions

Visitor Numbers

Due to different scales of destinations in the sample, the percentages of visitors attracted by the icon attractions could better represent their drawing power than the absolute visitor numbers. From the results (Table 4), icon attractions were functioning more as supplements to the other tourism attractions in both the U.S. and China destinations. However, the icon attractions in China tended to have greater drawing power than those in the United States. As stated earlier, a huge inventory of heritage resources related to famous individuals exists

TABLE 3. Development of Icons as Tourist Attractions

	United States	China
Top 25 words	Museum, Marketing, Promote, Guide, Name, Heritage, History, Image, Brochures, Campaign, Events, Park, Works, Community, Festival, Hall, Legacy, Logo, Pictures, President, Print, Publications, Sports, Statue, Web	Temple, Mausoleum, Media, Event, Propaganda, Portrait, Festival, Exhibition, Statue, Park, Exploitation, Advertising, Newspaper, Culture, Brand, Development, Image, TV, Cooperation, Organize, History, Seminar, Marketing, Promote, Campaign

in China due to its very long history. In addition, it is very common that cultural heritage resources associated with several icons exist within the same destination, which undoubtedly increases the overall drawing power of the pool of icon attractions in Chinese destinations. Another potential explanation may be found in the combination of attractions in U.S. destinations versus those in China. The destinations in China appear to have a much higher proportion of historic and sightseeing attractions that are associated with specific people.

Destinations in the United States feature more modern and contemporary attractions that put more emphasis on visitor participation.

Impacts on Residents' Daily Lives

When the executives were asked about the extent the icons' works or contributions impacted the contemporary daily lives of local residents, a significant difference was obtained (Table 4). The Chinese DMO executives perceived that icons had greater impact on the contemporary daily lives of

TABLE 4. Impacts of Icons as Tourist Attractions

The Percentage of Visitors to Destinations due to Icon Attractions

	United States (n = 124)	China (n = 124)	Chi-square	df	Sig. Level
			7.36	3	0.061
Less than 25%	67.70%	53.20%			
25 to 49.9%	20.20%	25.80%			
50 to 74.9%	9.70%	12.90%			
75% or more	2.40%	8.10%			

The Extent the Icon's Work or Contributions Impacted the Contemporary Daily Lives of Local Residents

	United States (n = 125)	China (n = 124)	Chi-square	df	Sig. Level
			28.143	3	0.000**
Deeply impact	8.00%	24.40%			
Partially impact	36.00%	47.20%			
Have little or no impact	40.00%	26.00%			
No definite opinion on this topic	16.00%	2.40%			

Investment on the Projects of Icon Attractions

	United States (n = 64)	China (n = 70)	Chi-square	df	Sig. Level
Millions of dollars	26.60%	40.00%	18.418	3	0.000**
Less than 1 million dollars	31.30%	8.60%			
Invest nothing in these projects	20.30%	5.70%			
Unsure about the costs	21.80%	45.70%			

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

local residents: 24.4% stating that icons had a deep impact, and 47.2% attributing a partial impact. In contrast, 40% of the U.S. DMO executives felt the icons had little or no impact on residents' daily lives, compared to 26% of the Chinese executives. As mentioned above, history and culture both have direct impacts on local residents' attitudes to icons. A good example is Qufu in Shandong, China, and the legendary birthplace of Kong Fu Zi (Confucius). The residents in Qufu are proud to be perceived as the decedents of Confucius and like to be seen as erudite and sophisticated.

Investment in Icon Attractions

The DMO executives were asked for an estimate of the investment costs of projects to support the use of icons as attractions in their destinations (Table 4). Only 64 executives in the United States and 70 in China provided responses. The proportion of destinations in China investing millions of dollars on icon attractions was much higher than in the United States. However, the percentages of the destinations investing less than 1 million dollars and nothing at all in the United States were both higher than those in China. Overall, the distribution of investment in the United States was comparatively more even than that in China.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

This research examined a set of effectiveness criteria for examining icon attractions. Three situational factors influencing the operation of icon attractions (culture, history, and government involvement) were suggested and further identified in the comparison of the United States and China. The study also envisaged that icon attractions can be analyzed from three aspects: characteristics of icons, organization, and impacts. These effectiveness criteria might serve as a foundation for future research on famous individuals employed as tourist attractions. It may also be helpful

in the operation and management of icon attractions by industry practitioners.

The comparison of the use of icon attractions in the United States and China appeared to verify the choice and practical value of these effectiveness criteria. It also identified some potential advantages and disadvantages in the operation of icon attractions in the two countries, which provided a number of valuable managerial implications. For example, the selection of human icons as tourist attractions should be approached cautiously and with considerable thought. Icon distinctiveness is influenced by history, culture, government policies, and several other external factors. The employment of unsuitable icons may have disappointing results and adversely affect other existing attractions. A successful experience in employing a specific icon or icon type cannot necessarily be transferred to another culture setting or even to another destination within the same country.

From the marketing aspect, the importance of Internet as an advertising and promotion method used for icon attractions needs to be stressed, which is one disadvantage of the destinations in China. Today, the Internet offers more information than many media. At the same time, as an unrestrained medium, everyone can enter and state views freely. Therefore, more people are choosing to search for tourism information online. Additionally, the cost on promotion online is much lower than for some traditional advertising methods, such as TV and full-color magazines. Considering the Internet's relative advantages, it is the most highly recommended medium for promoting icons as tourist attractions.

Secondly, publicity on icons should be one of the key considerations for developing marketing strategies and is especially important for destinations employing living icons. This is a weakness of the destinations in the United States. Publicity is a deliberate attempt to manage the public's perception of a subject. The subjects of publicity include people, goods and services, organizations of all kinds, and works of art or entertainment.

From a marketing perspective, publicity is one component of promotion and a tool of public relations. The advantages of publicity are its relatively low costs and higher credibility. The disadvantages are the lack of control over how the releases are used and the low percentage of releases that are taken up by the media. To a large extent, the general public's attitude to celebrities is affected by publicity. A good example is the Bill Clinton sex scandal. To take the idea further, the public's attitude to famous individuals directly influences their decisions to visit destinations. Therefore, destinations must remain sensitive to the publicity on the icons employed as attractions, which will help them to make timely adjustments to marketing strategies.

Third, destinations should cooperate with other organizations in resource identification, icon attraction administration, marketing, and quality control. These organizations include: private-sector businesses, convention and visitor bureaus or regional tourism offices, trusts or friends society, and government agencies (Pearce et al., 2003).

The destinations employing icons as attractions often encounter the dilemma that celebrities' lives had an impact on many places and therefore several destinations have a claim of the individuals' pasts. These destinations can compete for a "share of fame" but also can develop many interesting cooperative programs. For example, through designing specific tourist routes connecting several destinations, they can more completely reflect the individual's life, providing interpretation with sufficient depth and subtlety to satisfy the deeply-committed enthusiast as well as the mildly interested.

Another significant suggestion is on the development of icon attractions. Icon attractions can be central or peripheral attractions in destinations. Because the physical facilities for icon attractions usually need significant investment, it may not be necessary to devote scarce financial and human resources when they are only peripheral or sideline attractions. Alternatively, destinations can

organize events, festivals, and campaigns featuring famous figures every year to attract special-interest groups. Especially for living icons, Pearce et al. (2003) pointed out that "the lives of contemporary figures are in a state of flux and their status as attraction figures has substantial potential to change. Accordingly, short-term rather than long-term tourism strategies are likely to be the most appropriate for capitalizing on the icon potential of living legends."

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH NEEDS

Although this research provided a useful framework for icon attractions, it also had some limitations. First, there is a limited amount of academic research literature directly associated with icon attractions. Therefore, the design of the questionnaire lacked in some degree of theoretical foundation. Second, limitations of time and funds dictated that the samples of destinations in both countries were relatively small, and consequently the results should be considered exploratory. The use of different data-gathering procedures in the two nations represents another major limitation of this study. Of course, varying conditions across nations often dictate the use of different data-gathering methods, and some research has been conducted that indicates such practices do not necessarily affect the comparability of the results (Webster, 1966). Nevertheless, the results of this study should be interpreted with this limitation in mind.

The research on icons as tourism attractions is still at the initial stage and there are many opportunities for further research. Culture, history, and government involvement in tourism are all broad fields. This study only touched tips of the iceberg. The extension of the discussion on these three situational factors into the realm of developing icon attractions presents as an additional research and marketing opportunity. Second, the effectiveness criteria in this study only presented three aspects and underlining

situational factors in the operation of icon attractions. The relationships among these factors in the effectiveness models also need to be determined in further research. Third, more factors related to the icons themselves should be included in the effectiveness criteria, such as scale of fame (geographic area of notoriety, e.g., worldwide versus local), length of fame (number of years, e.g., enduring fame versus short-lived), generational (ability to span generations, i.e., icon's life spanned generations or appeal spanned generations). The last but not least important, the research needs to be expanded to more nations in the eight culture clusters designed by Hofstede (1983), such as European (Pan-Europe) and Asian (Pan-Asia) countries, Canada and other North and South American countries (Pan-America), and Australia and New Zealand.

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APPENDIX

Individuals as Tourist Icon Attractions Study
Part 1: General Opinions on the Characteristics of Individuals as Tourist Icon Attractions

1. In general, what era of icons do you use in your destination? (Check as many as apply)

   ☐ Historic (17th century or before)
   ☐ Modern (18th or 19th century)
   ☐ Contemporary (20th or 21st century)

2. What type of icons do you use in your destination? (Check a many as apply)

   ☐ Sports
   ☐ Entertainers
   ☐ Criminals/antiheroes
   ☐ Literary/artistic figures
   ☐ Royalty
   ☐ Explorers
   ☐ Religious figures
   ☐ Military figures
   ☐ Mythical figures/book characters
   ☐ Inventors
   ☐ Political
   ☐ Business/philanthropy

Part 2: Organizations of Individual Icons in Your Destination as Tourist Icon Attractions

3. What do you think is the best way to promote an icon as a tourist attraction? (Check only one)

   ☐ Print media advertising
   ☐ Internet/Web
   ☐ TV or radio
   ☐ Brochures
   ☐ Visitor guides
   ☐ Other

4. What has been done to make visitors aware of the association between the icon or icons and your destinations? (Check only one)

   ☐ Agencies, including yours, have taken action to make your destination more popular with visitors due to the association with the icon or icons
   ☐ Outside forces, events, or organizations have made your destination more popular with visitors due to the association with the icon or icons
   ☐ A combination of the two above
   ☐ No definite opinion on this topic
   ☐ Other

5. Are you concerned with the types of publicity about the icon/icons in various media sources—print media, Internet, TV, or radio—and its impacts on your destination? (Check only one)

   ☐ Always concerned
   ☐ Sometimes concerned
   ☐ Rarely concerned
   ☐ Never concerned

6. Would you use an individual to attract visitors to your destination if she or he was also associated with another place or places? (Check only one)

   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No
   ☐ No definite opinion on this issue

7. What specific development projects have been completed in your destination to support the use of the icon/ icons as attractions (Please describe in writing)

Part 3: Impacts of Icons as Attractions in Your Destination

8. What percentage of the visitors to your destination comes because of the icon/ icons? (Check only one)

☐ 75% or more
☐ 50 to 74.9%
☐ 25 to 49.9%
☐ Less than 25%

9. To what extent has the icon's work or contributions impacted the contemporary daily lives of local residents? (Check only one)

☐ Deeply impacted the contemporary daily lives of local residents and these effects are very visible and apparent
☐ Partially impacted the contemporary daily lives of local residents, and the effects are somewhat visible

☐ Has little or no impact on the contemporary daily lives of local residents, and the effects are not apparent
☐ No definite opinion on this topic

10. How much has your destination invested in the use of icons as attractions in your destinations? (Check only one)

☐ Millions of dollars
☐ Less than 1 million dollars
☐ Invest nothing in these projects
☐ Unsure about the costs